

Ark Volume 16

Act 1: Slums

“Huk huk huk, I’ve finished.”

“Already?”

The old man looked at Ark with amazed eyes.

“It should take at least 4 hours to get to the pier and back. Yet you returned from that place overrun with dangerous monsters after just 1 hour and with my luggage?”

“It sounded urgent so I hurried as much as possible.”

“I’ll say this clearly. But I honestly didn’t expect that much from you. In regards to transportation work, there are always small and large problems. In particular, it’s not a surprise to be attacked by thieves or monsters. Of course, I can ask the garrison to look for it but it would take many days for them to accept my commission. Since it is on a very tight schedule and is an urgent delivery, I had no choice but to rely on a foreigner.”

The old man seemed to be complaining as he shook his head.

“But you’re different from the lazy foreigners in this area. Even if they accept my request, they would take many hours to do it. Since they always receive a lot of commissions so they would complete the most urgent one first.”

“I place customer satisfaction as my top priority.”

Although he was breathing hard, Ark tried to make the best impression as possible. The old man nodded and said.

“I know, I know. Even though I doubted you, I never thought that you could find the luggage so quickly. It is the first time I’ve met a sincere foreigner like you. Now, this is the reward I’ve promised.”

“Thank you very much.”

Clink, clink.

Ark spoke thankful words but he had tears in his eyes as he saw the coins. He had ran around for 1 and a half hours and all he received was 50 silver. He could earn more than that hunting one or two monsters and selling japtem. Anyway, an information window appeared after he received the compensation.

-You have completed the <Find the lost luggage at the pier> quest.

Compensation: 50 silver, +1000 experience, +7 fame

‘I ran a marathon for one hour only to receive that compensation.....’

The old man had a lot of complaints about other users but Ark could understand their feelings. If done at a normal pace, the quest would normally take 2 hours. No matter how low levelled the area, level 150 users wouldn’t really care about that sort of compensation. They would only accept it when there were other quests in that area. Since there were a few quests, the users unconsciously felt like there was no need to rush. Sometimes the NPC might even become such a nuisance that they would cancel the quest. Since the level 366 Ark had completed such a boring quest, it was natural for the NPC to look favourably upon him. And the favourably impression from the NPC gave a more realistic profit.

“I’m genuinely grateful that you sincerely accepted my quest. I’ve decided to write a letter of recommendation so that anyone in my business who you encounter will know about the sincere and polite foreigner. I have a fairly wide network of acquaintances. If you show this recommendation to my partners then you will receive a more generous reward.”

The old man wrote a recommendation letter and gave it to him.

-You have received additional compensation since the satisfaction of the

client has exceeded 100%.

The old man who commissioned the quest is an NPC who engages in transporting baggage from Ciel. If the lost luggage was unable to be delivered on time then the transporter's reputation would receive a big hit. Thanks to your sincere work, the old man is able to keep his reputation intact. As a sign of gratitude, this client has provided a bonus compensation. You've also received a letter of recommendation from a satisfied transporter. If you show the letter of recommendation to other transporters then it is possible to receive additional rewards and fame.

Additional compensation: 10 silver, +3 fame

* Special item 'Transporter's letter of recommendation' acquired.

Transporter's letter of recommendation: If you show it to another transporter then it is possible to receive a higher rank quest. In addition, the probability of receiving additional compensation and fame will increase.

'Phew, it is a success!'

Ark sighed with relief as he took the Letter of Recommendation. This was the reason why Ark completed the quest quickly. It was unnecessary to say again, but NPCs gave various types of quests. If NPCs spoke about time running out then it was often a quest with a time limit. Naturally, if the quest was completed quickly then the NPC's satisfaction would rise. If the degree of satisfaction exceeded 100% then he would receive additional compensation. Of course, the bonus compensation wasn't that great. In addition, completion of the quest within 1 hour was needed for satisfaction to go above 100% then considerable effort was needed. Therefore a lot of users gave up on satisfaction early. If they acted greedily while thinking about consumer satisfaction, they might inadvertently make a mistake that would lead to death.

'But this is easy to do in a low level area.'

That wasn't a problem for Ark at all.

"Chik chik, he smells dangerous for some reason!"

There was a more than 150 level difference between Ark and the monsters surrounding Ciel. If he didn't approach the monsters intentionally then they would avoid him due to fear. Even though chaotic users also regularly appeared, he was able to settle it easily with a few swings of his sword. If he rode Radunma to save some time then it was possible to achieve customer satisfaction.

"Is there any other problem?"

"You've completed all the urgent problems."

".....Really?"

Ark sighed with regret, causing the old man to smile.

"But you don't have to worry about work because transporters gather here so there is always a number of jobs. Ah that reminds me, I ran into my friend Kurad drinking alcohol at the tavern the other day and he said a big headache had occurred. If you head to the Twilight bar next to the west gateway and show him the Letter of Recommendation then he might give you a job."

"Thank you for the information. I'll go immediately."

Ark said farewell and stepped towards the west gateway. If he worked diligently then he might be able to receive additional compensation from this quest. Although he received information about the next quest, Ark's face wasn't that bright.

"How much have I gained so far? Character information window!"

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment	Good +500		

Fame	6025 (+500)	Level	366
Profession		Dark Soul	
Title		Cat Knight, Oberium's Caretaker, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero	
Health	6855 (+225)	Mana	6745(+25)
Spiritual Power	400	Strength	745 (+38)
Agility	925 (+110)	Stamina	1,155 (+35)
Wisdom	161 (+10)	Intelligence	1,173 (+5)
Luck	155 (+60)	Flexibility	158
Art of Communication	66	Affection	89 (+10)
Resilience	436		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		153	

"Huh....."

He sighed after checking the information window. The main character information window displayed many information aside from stats. But now Ark was only concerned with his fame. Since Ark was level 366 completing level 150 quests, he only received 60 silver and fame as additional compensation. No, he needed 7000 fame in order to learn the secret technique. In order to obtain the Entrusted Volumes, Ark had forsaken food and drinks for a day in order to grind his fame.

“If this is another luggage search then I will feel sick.”

Ark shook his head with a disgusted expression. The contents of the repetitive quests in Ciel were all similar. He only found this out later but Ciel a commerce city similar to Giran in Schudenberg. So most of the NPCs did transportation work. There was even a separate transporters union in the city. Most of the simple quests around the village were commissions from transporters. They were all ambushed by monsters and wanted to get their lost luggage back.

“Well, I was transporting some luggage here last time.....”

“The items lost in a monster attack? If you tell me the place then I will look for it!”

He had heard those words coming from NPCs so many times that he could no reply in his sleep. As soon as the quest was received, he accepted it and rode towards the location on Radunma. When he arrived at the quest area, he would rush the monsters like crazy. Once the monsters were taken care of, he would look for the items.

“Chik chik, and you? Did you exterminate our kind from the beginning?”

The dying monsters looked at him with accusing eyes.

‘I don’t want to be here either!’

He really wanted to say that. If he completed the quest then he would only receive 30~60 silver as compensation.....Since he was level 366, killing level 200 kobolds didn’t give any experience. He also received no loot. The only thing he could get was quest items. This system was to prevent high level users from coming to lower levelled areas. Therefore Ark repeated one day of hunting without receiving any profit.

“Dammit, I have to hold on to gain more fame.”

His circumstances surrounding the quests was really a pity. If Ark had been initially interested in fame then he would’ve collected 5000 more by now. In some cases, there were options to choose either money or

fame as a reward for several quests. And of course Ark chose money! If he knew it was possible to learn secret techniques then he would've chosen 100 fame over 1 silver.

"I don't need fame while running around!"

In the past, he never imagined he would need it.

"It's really crazy. Anyway, I have to give up japtem and experience for fame....."

It was a low level village so he had to give up experience and items. The problem was although NPCs gave different amounts of fame, it was obvious how much fame he would receive when the quest was repeated. In a low level area, he could only repeat the quest and receive compensation and fame a maximum of 10 times. But the problem was time. It took at least an hour and a half to receive the quest and wander to the area before coming back.

"I've spent 30 hours so far and completed 20 quests which gave me 150 fame. Thanks to word of mouth, the transporter quests gave an extra 50 fame which gave him 200. My current fame is 6025."

In order to earn the required 7000 fame to learn the secret technique, he needed 975 more fame. If he continued gaining 200 fame in one day then it was 5 more days of grinding quests.

"This Jackson's Hero title is also irritating."

Thanks to the Jackson's Hero title, his intimacy with NPCs increased by 30% instead of fame. So when completing quests, he would receive 30% less fame.

"Well, thanks to the high intimacy with the transporters, I eventually made up that lack of fame because of the word of mouth. Now the quests from the old man has ended but he gave me a Letter of Recommendation so I should continue getting more fame."

But did he have to grind for another four days just to achieve his target? Thinking of the next four days really made him feel gloomy.

“But there’s no other method.....”

Ark sighed and shook his head. If he solved quests with high difficulty then he would be given more fame. But he often had to go to other areas for such quests. If he grasped the wrong information when receiving the quests then it might take him many takes to complete. So it was better to repeat quests and receive 200 fame a day.

‘Should I catch chaotic users to increase my fame?’

Ark had also thought about that method. But there was a problem with that. Most of the chaotic users in a level 100~180 area were level 200. Since there was such a huge level difference, he would not receive a lot of fame. Staying at a village where he was 150 levels higher wasn’t very satisfying. Finally he came to the conclusion that repeating quests was the best way to gain fame. It would take a bit more time to fill his target amount but it was already at the point where he felt sick at the thought.

“Still, secret techniques are hard to find so I can’t possibly give it up.”

Although Ark was getting tired, he firmly braced himself. He wouldn’t stop until he receives the Entrusted Volumes from the legendary hobbit master! Even though it was annoying to gain 7000 fame, it was clearly a rare skill if it needed that much.

“Yes, it is more useful to have a good skill than a considerably rare item. In addition, I’ve already spent more than a day earning fame so it isn’t possible for me to give up. It’s just for now. I can recoup the lost money and experience but I can’t miss the opportunity to learn the skill.”

Ark murmured aloud and stepped into an alley. His movements were irritated at the thought of doing more transporter quests. When moving in the relevant area, his high level meant the surrounding monsters and chaotic users weren’t a problem at all. So Ark didn’t even need to summon Razak and Racard. It wasn’t necessary to summon Razak and

Racard and waste food. But no matter how high levelled he was, it would take time to move around. The only summon Ark was currently using was Radun.

Radun had a +500% movement speed so Ark could complete the quests 30% faster by using him. However, Ark still felt like he was moving too slowly. In order to save time, Ark used the [Quick] scroll to increase his movement speed by 20% for 30 minutes. [Quick] was a scrolls for relatively low level users so it was relatively cheap. Besides, this place was the magic kingdom so scrolls were cheaper here than they were in Schudenberg. Yet a single scroll still cost 50 silver! It was something that Ark would normally never waste money on! But Ark was now tired of gathering game so spending a little money wasn't a problem anymore.

'Completing the quest will still give me 60 silver. I have to use 2 scrolls for a return trip so that is 1 gold. I lose 40 silver every time a quest is complete but I would rather spend money if it would quicken the process.'

Ark thought like that and quickly used the [Vision] scroll. It was the first time he had used so many consumables since starting the game.

'I bought 8 yesterday but after completing the quest I only have one left? Since I need a minimum of four more days, I should buy at least 30~40 scrolls.'

However, Ark didn't head towards the shopping centre to purchase the scrolls.

'If I have to buy items then it is better to help that person.'

The boy with financial difficulties had appeared in Ark's head. Ark learned that the boy who he first encountered in Ciel was called Ronnie. At the time, Ark hadn't understood the Bristania language and had tried to get Ark to buy the dictionary for 20 gold. He had misunderstood Ronnie as a con artist and almost cursed him. But after finding out information from the Magic Institute, Ark had abandoned the discount in order to buy the dictionary from Ronnie. Thanks to that

Ark had bonded with Ronnie. And after getting some money from the repetitive quests, he would purchase items from Ronnie.

‘I think it is quite rare.’

Ark smiled strangely and scratched his head. In fact, he had seen many pitiful NPCs while playing the game. No matter how pitiful they looked in the game, wasn't it impossible to help everyone? In addition, Ark was the type of person who would say ‘Yes, I will help!’ Yet Ronnie weighed on his mind for some reason. Although he felt sorry because of the misunderstanding, he identified with the boy as he also lived a hard life.

“Ah, Ark hyung!”

Ronnie ran and greeted him as he entered the alley. Even though he was wearing scruffy attire, his features were quite good. In contrast to when he first arrived in Bristania, Ark's greeting was clear and his understanding was now at 75%.

“Have you been well?”

“I've been alright like always. But why are you here?”

“This guy, is that a question someone running a business should else? Of course it is to buy things.”

“Things?”

“Yes. Do you have more [Quick] scrolls?”

“Huh? You already bought eight [Quick] scrolls yesterday. Have you already used all of them?”

“This hyung-nim is working really hard. This time I need 30, no please give me 50.”

“5-50 scrolls?”

50 scrolls would cost 25 scrolls. It was understandable if this was a store but Ronnie was operating a street stall so it was difficult for him to get

50 scrolls. The transaction was bigger than Ronnie expected so he made an embarrassed expression.

“Why? You can’t get it?”

“Ah, no..... That’s not it. Yesterday Ark hyung bought 8 scrolls so there is only 2 left and I haven’t been able to get more.”

Ronnie answered hesitantly. However, Ark had already expected that. Ark had worked at a street stall before and learned the inner workings of it. Since Ronnie only made a certain amount of money a day, it was impossible to have a quantity of 50 scrolls.

“Will you be able to get it? I’ll wait so please bring it to me.”

“But if you want 50.....”

“Are you afraid I will order the scrolls and then run away? As expected, you’re also a merchant. I understand. The [Quick] scrolls are 50 silver for one? 50 pieces is 25 gold. I’ll give you a deposit so bring it to me quickly.”

“Huh? Deposit?”

Ark handed him 25 gold. Once again, Ark was aware of Ronnie’s viewpoint. Ronnie normally sold japtem so 25 gold was a lot of income for him. Once supplied, Ark would buy it immediately. The place Ronnie was getting the items was probably from the shopping area.

If Ronnie didn’t have the 25 gold then then what shop owners would accept a credit for the scrolls?

‘I understand the feeling well.’

Ark smiled and looked at Ronnie. But Ronnie took the deposit with a hesitant face.

“What is it? You can’t buy the items?”

“I..... That.....”

Ronnie wavered and studied Ark's face before saying.

"Hyung doesn't seem to know..... If you buy it from the store then you can get it for 5% cheaper. I buy the items and then sell it at a fixed price. That also applies to the [Quick] scrolls you bought yesterday. Buying one or two is okay, but if hyung wants to buy 50 then it might be better from the store....."

'Oh my God!'

Ark made a strange face at Ronnie's words. Didn't he understand that giving a deposit and buying the scrolls was for Ronnie? Ark wasn't a different person. Sometimes stores would give discounts when items were bought in bulk. No, anyone could know that information just by reading the flyers in every store. Still, Ark had visited Ronnie and bought items intentionally. Even Ark thought that his actions were really strange. If he could save 5% of 25 gold, which was 1 gold, 25 silver and 1 copper then Ark normally wouldn't hesitate. He was astonished at how much his pattern of behaviour had changed.

'I don't know why but it might be because of my new awareness.'

Ark gave a bittersweet smile as he looked at Ronnie. Although Ark had experienced similar situations before, the crucial part that differed was Ronnie. Despite Ark giving him profit, Ronnie was overly honest. He was a pure boy who felt guilty about possible cheating Ark. Ark had abandoned his honesty early in his difficult life and truly hoped that Ronnie wouldn't lose that. But Ark couldn't help for nothing.

'Well, although it doesn't look good for me.....'

"Eh? Really? I've only bought a few so far so I had no idea."

Ark put a deliberately surprised expression on his face and said.

"Hey, thanks for letting me know this good information. 5% of 50 scrolls is 1 gold and 25 silver. Then wouldn't 200 scrolls be 5 gold? Ugh, if everybody buys scroll then wouldn't I be able to save hundreds of gold? It is unfortunate but luckily I know now. Then....."

Ark smiled and grabbed Ronnie's nose.

"This guy, aren't you being foolish?"

"Ah, ouch! Ark hyung, it hurts."

"You've got to learn the basics."

"Huh? The basics?"

"For a merchant, they have to endeavour to earn profits even if the sky is collapsing. If you're unsure about the customer then you should use whatever sales pitch possible. How will you make money if you don't do that?"

"B-but....."

"Be quiet, I don't want to hear anymore then bring me the items quickly."

"Huh? Then?"

"Although I understand that I can use the store, I've already given you the deposit. And I can save money from now on thanks to you so just buy it this time."

"H-Hyung.....!"

Ronnie looked at Ark with eyes brimming with tears. Then Ark scratched his head and shouted with embarrassment.

"Don't misunderstand. Don't keep dawdling back and forth or do you not want me to buy items from you anymore?"

"U-understood. I'll be going."

Ronnie rubbed his eyes with his sleeve and turned around. Suddenly someone ran from the other side and shouted.

"Ronnie, Ronnie! It's serious!"

"Eh? Tarun ajusshi? Is it serious? What's wrong?"

"Your mother is having another fit!"

"Uh, my mother?"

Ronnie's face turned white and terrified.

Was this Ronnie's house?' Ark looked around with an uncomfortable expression. After listening to the man called Tarun's words, Ronnie urgently left for home. At that time, Ark had run after Ronnie to ask for the deposit back. When considering Ronnie's character, of course he would return with the items but Ark had to continue doing the repeatable quests. Since there was no time, he ended up coming along to Ronnie's house.

The rich and poor lived in completely different worlds. Once of the richest neighbourhoods in Korea was called Gangnam, where they people living there had allowances of millions of won a day. Meanwhile, the poor had to gather together to rent a 100,000 won room. And that rule also applied to New World. It was natural for money to be important in the commerce town of Ciel in Bristania. But just on the outskirts of Ciel was the slums where the poor lived, who had to worry about getting a meal every day. Ronnie's house was 10 minutes away from Ciel on the corner of the slums. Ramshackle houses were placed here and there with boarded up planks.

"Mother!"

Ronnie threw his baggage into the house and ran to the bed. The only household goods was an old pot. A middle age woman coughing could be seen lying on a wooden bench in the corner of the shack. With just one glance, it was obvious that the lady was sick. She had black and red spots all over the body, while her face was pale and sweaty.

"Huk huk huk, R-Ronnie..... Ronnie....."

"Mother, I'm here! It's me! It's Ronnie!"

“Ahh, Ronnie..... Ronnie..... My son.....”

The middle-aged woman struggled to reach out her hands in order to grab Ronnie. He fidgeted with tearful eyes and shouted.

“Painkillers, the painkillers!”

“She’s already taken the painkiller. But.....”

“Oh, Mother, Mother!”

Ronnie cried and howled at Tarun’s answer. At the same time, the body of the lady bent like a bow and she moaned. Then, Ark had a thought and his heart dropped. A middle-aged lady struggling with pain with a boy held her hand and didn’t know what to do! He had seen this scene before. No, he had experienced it. The scene unfolding before his eyes was just like Ark holding onto his mother’s hand in the ICU while praying. The rage and despair Ark felt at that time couldn’t be described in words. He felt a horrified fear seeing this familiar scene occur in front of him.

‘Damn, indeed.....’

Even though he had experienced it a few times, he still couldn’t get used to it. The feeling was so unpleasant that Ark felt like closing his eyes and turning away. However, he couldn’t pretend not to see the scene.

‘This will be dangerous if I leave!’

Ark had taken care of numerous sick people in New World and intuitively sensed the danger. If this was reality then it would end like that, but this wasn’t reality. Hyun-woo was only a gamer but Ark was a great warrior, a cook and a caretaker! Ark pushed Ronnie away and gasped the hand of the lady.

“Have courage. I know it is painful. Other people might not understand but I know. I’m not saying I understand your pain. Who in this world would be able to understand the pain of a sick person? But I know. I

know the pain of watch someone you love being in pain and being unable to do anything.”

“Ahh, Ronnie..... Ronnie.....”

“Yes, that’s right. Be strong for Ronnie’s sake!”

Ark grasped the lady’s hand as he prayed and gave her hope. Then a faint light started to appear around their clenched hands. The feeble light gradually expanded like a candle and lit up the room until it entered the lady’s body. Then the lady’s pain eased and her breathing gradually stabled. After a while, her breathing became peaceful and she fell into a deep sleep. The effects of Advanced Nursing was shown and the crisis was conquered. Tarun and Ronnie looked at Ark with amazed eyes and murmured.

“Oh, such a thing! You didn’t even use painkillers!”

“H-Hyung. Thank you!”

“..... It’s not a cure.”

“I’m aware of that. But..... After having a seizure, she suffers for several days. To see her fall asleep with a relaxed expression..... Thank you. Thank you very much.”

Ronnie cried out in a tearful voice and bowed repeatedly. Ark’s chest throbbed with every bow. A long time ago, Ark had repeated the same words to a doctor. After he bowed, Ronnie seemed to remember something and took out his purse.

“I’m sorry. Here is the earlier deposit. I’m sorry but today.....”

“That’s it. I’ll take care of the scrolls so you just take good care of your mother.”

Ronnie nodded and sat down beside the bed, wiping his mother’s face with a wet towel. Ark couldn’t watch anymore and exited the house.

Act 2: Investigation

“Phew……!”

Ark who had come outside took deep breaths and made himself calm down. It was just for a moment, but Ark had thought the middle aged lady was his mother in the ICU and his chest pounded. He wanted to shake off the unpleasant feeling. Once Nursing was finished, he didn't hesitate to step outside. Tarun who exited later approached Ark and said.

“Really thank you a lot. In recent times, her symptoms have been so severe that painkiller don't work but the crisis was overcome this time thanks to you. If Margaret…… Ah, that is the name of Ronnie's mother. Anyway, I don't know what Ronnie would do if something serious happens to Margaret.”

“…… What disease does Margaret have?”

“I don't know.”

Tarun sighed and replied.

“In fact I'm a pharmacist. Well, I didn't receive formal training but I gained second hand knowledge after listening to the residents of Ciel.”

Tarun murmured and started talking.

“You can probably understand just by seeing this place but the residents can't afford expensive medicines from Ciel. Fortunately, we've been able to treat most sicknesses so far. But a year ago? Suddenly residents here acquired the same mysterious disease as Margaret and the medicine have no effect on that disease.”

“There are more people who caught the disease?”

“Yes, strangely the Ciel residents don't have a problem. Only the residents here have become ill by that mysterious disease. The strange thing is, children with weak immunity are fine and only the adults are

affected. Magaret especially has really serious symptoms. Therefore Ronnie.....”

Tarun looked at the shack with sadness and explained. His father had passed away a long time ago so it was just Ronnie and his mother. Of course it wasn't an abundant life. If it was abundant then they wouldn't live in the slums. However, his mother worked hard so Ronnie still lived happily. Then one day his mother caught an unidentified illness. And Ronnie's tough life began.

“Since then, Ronnie started trying to work in Ciel to make money for Magaret's medicine. But there isn't that much work in Ciel for a slum dweller. In my case, I was just lucky to run some chores for a pharmacist.”

However, Ronnie was 10 years old at the time and there wasn't that much he could do. Because he was young, he couldn't work carrying goods as sometimes he was couldn't be unscrupulous merchants who would work him to exhaustion without compensation. But it was the attitudes of the Ciel residents that was the harder. When a boy from the slums was seen snooping around town, he would often be cursed and sometimes beaten up by boys the same age.

“If it was just that then it would be okay. The Ciel residents hate for the slum residents worsened recently. It really is sad that they think that way about their neighbours.”

“Huh? Why is that?”

“Like I said, Margaret's illness began a year ago. Then other slum residents started showing the same symptoms. So they think that Magaret spread the illness to the residents. They don't want an infectious disease to be spread.”

Ark remembered the first time he met Ronnie. At the time, Ronnie had wounds all over. He hadn't thought it important at the time but now he got a general picture after Tarun's words. Ronnie's wounds had been

caused by the Ciel residents because he was from the slums and was the son of the person spreading the infectious disease.

“Are you certain it is infectious?”

“I’m positive. Although why did the sickness spread to the residents of the slums while Ronnie and I who are closest to Magaret are fine?”

Tarun spoke in a firm tone and sighed.

“Nevertheless, Ronnie didn’t make any excuses and just endured the curses and beating silently. He probably thought he would be driven off if he showed signs of rebellion. That young child.”

Even with all the bullying, Ronnie just continued going in and out of Ciel to earn money. When money was gathered, he visited Tarun and they bought various medicinal herbs. There was not enough money to buy expensive medicines so he asked Tarun to create the medicine. However, none of the herbs helped Magaret at all. She got seizures almost every day and only painkillers can relieve her pain. But today even the painkillers stopped working.

“The painkillers is also medicine. If used a lot then tolerance will build up. The crisis is over this time thanks to you but in the future it will be a serious problem. It seems like Magaret no longer has the stamina to hold on. If she has one or two more seizures then it’ll probably be over.....”

Tarun couldn’t stop sighing at the thought.

‘Such a thing?’

Ark had some questions ever since meeting Ronnie. He had recognized him with one glance. The reason he felt a strange sense of empathy with Ronnie wasn’t simply because of an underprivileged childhood. Ronnie hadn’t said anything but Ark intuitively sensed that they had similar situations. Ark was also the same. In order to take care of his sick mother, he had to work in front of people who looked at him with indifferent eyes. Ark knew Ronnie’s feelings better than anyone. The feeling of

hopelessness which made him want to curse the whole world.....Why couldn't anyone understand? Of course he understood. He had no choice but to understand.

'I want to help.'

That desire suddenly rose in Ark's mind. He never wanted to help without anything in return. It had been a long time since he truly felt like this. But 'Nursing' wasn't a treatment. It was possible to reduce the sick person's pain but the skill couldn't treat the sick. Even if Ark's sincerity caused Miracle Nursing, the situation wouldn't change that much. When looking at past circumstances of Miracle Nursing, it gave him the opportunity to treat the disease but not completely cure it.

'However, if Miracle Nursing is triggered then the situation will improve. Seeing that seizure just now, Magaret can't last long.'

Ark had a crazy idea and entered the shack before beginning to use Nursing on Magaret. When thinking back, Miracle Nursing was activated in unexpected situations while in other sick emergencies it wasn't triggered at all.

'I have to sincerely want to save this woman. This time I'm more earnest than others. It will be good if it is triggered in this situation. Why isn't it working?'

Ark cursed as he couldn't trigger Miracle Nursing.

Then something popped into Ark's head.

'Wait, didn't Ronnie try all sorts of herbs on Magaret after she got sick that didn't work? I've experienced this situation before!'

It was just like when he met the Galgin who had trouble with food poisoning. At that time, Miracle Nursing wasn't activated and Lariette's recovery magic didn't work either. It was because the Galgin's food poisoning was unrelated to a disease. The Galgin had received food poisoning because they ate contaminated food.

‘What if Magaret is in a similar situation? That might explain why Miracle Nursing isn’t triggered. Miracle Nursing was a skill that would trigger when taking care of the sick. Therefore it wasn’t triggered when used on the poisoned Galgin. So a cure for disease isn’t the answer.’

That reminded him, the black red dots on Magaret’s body was similar to the Galgin.

‘Now that I’m thinking about it, Nursing isn’t really useful here.’

“Ronnie, take good care of your mother. I’m going to investigate a little bit.”

Ark comforted Ronnie and left the shack. Ark had treated the Galgin’s food poisoning using a different method. The method Ark used then was to investigate the area for the source of poisoning and then produced an antidote.

‘Normal NPCs wouldn’t go around picking and eating strange ingredients like the Galgin. But they’re poor so there is a possibility of eating some strange ingredients. That is also the reason why only the residents of the slums are sick. It is impossible for the rich residents of Ciel to eat strange ingredients. I have to investigate it.’

The first place Ark visited was the river by the slums. If something was contaminated in the area then the river would have the most significant impact. As expected, he found suspicious information when using Ingredient Identification on the river water.

-Common water from the unclean river flowing near the Ciel slums.

It is able to be applied to food.

* Advanced Additional Information: It seems like ordinary water but when looked at closely, the water from near the slums seems quite unclean. The unclean water is caused by serious pollution. Fortunately, there are no signs of serious pollution just yet but the descendants will need to be careful. Less than 1 year of damage will take decades for

nature to recover.

‘There’s no doubt, this is the cause!’

After confirming the information about the river water, Ark picked the surrounding ingredients. Since there was no household water, environmental pollution seemed to be a real problem in New World. And the first ones damaged by environmental pollution was the poor. Although the information window said the contamination wasn’t at a serious level yet, he didn’t know what happened to the ingredients affected by the unclean water. An ingredient might react with the pollution to cause a poison. In reality, weren’t there instances of carcinogens detected in food grown in polluted areas?

‘There might be a special hidden element in the ingredients that is activated by the contamination. If I find the right ingredient and use the drug extraction properties of Food Worshipper then I can make a simple antidote. But if I want to use the Food Worshipper technique then the survival pot is necessary.....’

Ark looked at the ingredients with an unbearable expression. Currently Ark had left the pot with the Magic Institute. Even if he wanted to treat the residents of the slums, he couldn’t possible abandon his immortality pill that would be completed in 40 hours. However, 40 hours in real time was 120 hours for an NPC. That was five days. If Magaret had another seizure then he couldn’t guarantee she would live.

‘Ah, that’s right!’

Ark was worried for a while before he thought of a method. Tarun was a pharmacist for the slums. Even if he didn’t know about the contaminated river water, he was still a pharmacist. He should be equipped with appliances to handle herbs. When Ark returned to the slums, Tarun immediately gave permission. His character was straightforward.

“If you can cure the residents then I will help however possible.”

"Thank you, then please assist me."

Ark arranged the medicinal herbs at Tarun's house and started actively working. Unlike the automatic function of his survival pot, he had to manually use Tarun's tools but he was somehow able to examine the ingredients.

-The ingredients do not match!

"Damn!"

However, the task was not as easy as he thought. Although he tried to extract various elements from the plants, none of them matched with the river water.

"Maybe there are other ingredients around?"

"Let's see? That seems like all the tolerable ones....."

Tarun scratched his head and replied. Of course, there might be some ingredients Tarun didn't know about. However, if most of the slum residents were poisoned then it would have to be a common ingredient. If there was no other ingredients.....

'Wait, Magaret was the first one to show symptoms 1 year ago. If the ingredients were the cause of the disease then shouldn't it have been around then? The surrounding ecosystem can't just change in 1 year.

Ark suddenly had a thought and asked Tarun.

"Was there anything that changed around 1 year ago?"

"Something that changed? Again, I can't think of anything big."

"Anything is fine."

"Ah, I think the 'Seirun Workshop' started in Ciel at that time."

"Seirun Workshop?"

“Yes. The Seirun Workshop is the biggest alchemy workshop in Ciel. It is among the top 5 in Bristania. Various potions that are supplied throughout the country is made in Ciel.”

Ark’s eyes flashed at Tarun’s words. ‘Job Then Ronnie’s mother caught the disease after her job was over!’ It was something he hadn’t considered. If it wasn’t a problem with the ingredients in the slums then it might be something they passed on the way to work. And it is the place where various herbs and alchemy potions are handled! So Ark’s investigation reached a turning point thanks to Tarun’s information.

-These advanced recovery potions are created using a special technique that combines 10 different herbs.

And the Seirun workshop has made a special high density product. It is an essential item that can treat any injuries received in a battle.

Once used, it will instantly recover +650 health. However, it will have no effect on abnormal states such as poison or disease.

“Hmm.....”

Ark shook a bottle containing a deep red liquid. After receiving the information from Tarun, he visited the Seirun workshop and bought a potion. The different areas in New World had specialty products. Then so-called brand name items existed. Simply speaking, iron goods created by dwarves were traded more often. That was because they were specialists with iron so their products had better performance. The NPCs who had mastered techniques would produce items that were brand named. Just like in reality, the branded goods were slightly more expensive but the performance was good. And the city of Ciel in the magic kingdom of Bristania was known for producing brand name potions. While Seirun’s potions had a similar price to others, it recovered 100~150 more health than the other potion so it was considerably famous

in Bristania. They also significantly reduced the labour costs by hiring residents of the slums.

‘Then the people who went to the Seirun workshop became ill?’

It was doubtful. However, there might be a problem among the herbs in the potion. Even if there were no problems with the herb, he couldn’t be relieved. Since the herbs might be a fairly unique ingredient, sometimes combining the ingredients will cause toxicity. In fact, thieves often used ‘Poison Manufacturing’ to mix herbs together to make poisons. However, it was already a liquid mixture so there was no recognisable ingredients.

‘As expected, is it impossible to investigate the ingredients in the potions?’

When buying the potion, Ark had politely asked for the herb combinations. That was the reason why he bought the potion. However, it was a brand name item so the herbal formulation was top secret. They wouldn’t teach it just because he asked. Therefore Ark was misunderstood as an industrial spy and kicked out.

‘But if it’s not the river water and plants around the slums then this must be it. Is there any way to check the ingredients in here?’

Ark shook the potion and thought until a fact he forgotten popped into his head.

‘Wait? That reminds me that there are a lot of transporters here. And the potions sold by the Seirun workshop was the centre of Ciel’s industry. So there should be a lot of goods transported to and from the Seirun workshop.’

So Ark visited the Twilight tavern where transporters frequented a lot.

“That is correct. We deliver goods there and the finished products created by the Seirun workshop.”

The old man Ark previously helped nodded and replied. Ark showed great joy and asked.

“Can you tell me what type of ingredients you delivered to Seirun?”

“That’s a bit.....”

The old man scratched his head with hesitation.

The Seirun workshop supplied various potions to the entire southern area of Bristania. In order to maintain that type of market, it was necessary to defend the recipe. There were a lot of regulations that forbade the transporters and regular customers from mentioning it. However, Ark now had their full trust.

“Please just a little bit. I absolutely don’t have any bad intentions.”

“I know you’re not a bad person. But my company takes care of all the transportation around here. Rather than directly purchasing things and delivering them, Seirun just moves things around the head office. The boxes are already sealed up so I don’t know the contents. Besides, if they ever know that I let such information loose then I’ll be fired. I also have a wife and children.”

“Indeed.....”

Ark nodded his head although his gaze lingered on the old man. Then the old man made an inconvenient expression and sighed before muttering under his breath.

“Phew, it really is difficult..... Even if I don’t tell you, there is a method to figure it out.....”

“Huh? What is that?”

“If you think it over then there is a way. Didn’t you accept my request before? Yesterday I was transporting something and received a surprise attack from kobolds, making me lose some luggage. I need to find it. It is materials urgently requested by the Seirun workshop so they are pressuring me.

“I’m sorry, but this time.....”

Ark was about to answer when he suddenly raised his head. Then the old man smiled and winked. Now Ark could understand the old man's intentions. The lost luggage was supposed to be delivered to Seirun workshop. In other words, it contained the information Ark wanted to know. Of course, the items were related to the quest so Ark wouldn't be able to handle it freely. When receiving a quest, there was some kind of contract that didn't allow the related items to be sold at a store or consumed. But Ark didn't intend to consume or sell it. In other words, he could confirm the contents of the box.

"Since the box was handled by monsters, you can't be held responsible even if the box was opened."

"Thank you!"

"I should be thanking you for answering my requests....."

Ark grasped the old man's hand who just laughed and shook his head. This was the first time Ark was grateful to the Jackson's Hero title. Since coming to Ciel for two days, he had done the luggage quest at least 20 times so he had a high degree of intimacy with the NPC. In addition, there was the problem of what would happen if the old man was caught by the Seirun workshop. Without a high amount of intimacy, he wouldn't have given him that hint. Thanks to the special effect of Jackson's Hero, he received a 30% bonus in intimacy with all NPCs instead of fame. Because of that special effect, Ark managed to get a hint from the old man after only two days. Anyway, Ark accepted the quest and headed to the monster's territory. After retrieving the luggage, he checked the contents.

'..... Was my guess wrong?'

However, disappointment showed on Ark's face when he checked the contents. Inside the box were ordinary herbs.

'No, I still don't understand properly. Sometimes the herb formulation can vary according to the ingredients.'

He purchased the contents in Ciel and tested them at Tarun's house, but he was unable to find anything that would cause sickness. However, there was no doubt that it played a role. Ark was introduced to other old men and completed different transporter quests. It was to investigate the herbs delivered from other areas. However, that was nothing different.

'Does Magaret's sickness have nothing to do with the Seirun workshop? I'm back to the starting point.'

Ark had fallen into a maze and once again headed into the slums. Suddenly, a middle aged person wearing flashy clothes approached from one side.

"Hey. Are you Ark?"

"Yes, that's right....."

He stopped moving and the middle aged man happily approached.

"Ah, as expected. I've heard the rumours."

"Rumours?"

"The rumours have spread between the transporters delivering to our Seirun workshop."

"The workshop..... You mean Seirun workshop?"

"You already know? Then this talk will be quick. In fact, I am Agathe the owner of the Seirun workshop in Ciel. There is so much trouble with the surrounding monsters that deliveries are often behind schedule. But over the last few days, I've heard that you've found all the goods for the transporters. In addition, unlike other foreigners you completed the task in one hour."

Agathe made a friendly expression and moved closer.

"The transporters praised you so much that I specially came to you for a special favour. In fact, there has been a slightly unbearable problem. Shortly before they arrived, some workers were attacked near Rocky

Mountain and had their luggage stolen. That luggage is more expensive than the others.....”

Agathe coughed and said.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I’ve been a little annoyed. Anyway, I need those ingredients immediately. Can you find it for me? If you bring it back this evening then I’ll double, no triple what the transporters promised.”

Ark had a sudden flash at Agathe’s words.

‘Luggage transported directly..... Oh my god, why didn’t I think of it until now?’

If the manufacturing process was a secret then would the Seirun workshop entrust the important herbs to transporters? If Ark was the owner then he would only entrust the common ingredients to the transporters for the sake of security. Just as he was thinking this, Agathe added in a low voice.

“But don’t even think about opening the luggage. These days there are many people eager to plagiarize our techniques. Just now some guy tried to question the Seirun workshop. The items were stolen just 2 hours ago so it is impossible for the sealed iron box to be opened yet. If I find any evidence that the box is open then you’ll be formally accused. Do you understand?”

‘This guy is the owner of the workshop? Why do I smell something fishy coming from his words?’

Ark thought that as he saw Agathe’s unpleasant face. Anyway, a quest information window appeared after Agathe’s threat.

-A request from Agathe, owner of the Seirun workshop.

Agathe, the owner of the famous Seirun workshop in Ciel has an important quest for you. While the most important ingredient for Seirun’s brand potion, it was attacked and stolen by monsters. After hearing about your fame among the transporters, Agathe has

commissioned you to regain the goods. If you recover the goods then you will receive three times the normal reward given by transporters. However, if there are any traces of the luggage being damaged they there quest will be failed and you will have a hostile relationship with its workshop.

Difficulty level: C

Quest restriction: Completed more than 25 transport related quests.

‘This is an opportunity!’

Ark’s eyes sparkled as he checked the contents of the quest. It was the herb important to the Seirun workshop! If the mysterious disease affected the residents of the slum was related to the Seirun workshop then there was a 90% chance it was this herb. This belief hardened even more after seeing Agathe’s attitude.

“Please leave it to me!”

There was a faint smile on Ark’s mouth as he grasped Agathe’s hand.

—

Kuaaaaak!

The knife blade fell down weakly as the monster collapsed. It was a white monkey inhabiting the cave near the Rocky Mountains called the Etin. In contrast with the monsters he normally dealt with, this one was level 250. Ciel normally had level 200 users so this would be a difficult opponent for them. But Ark was level 366 so he cut down the Etin and searched the cave. A small box was visible near a group of Etin. The angel stamped on the side of the box was the trademark of the Seirun workshop.

-You have found the quest item ‘Seirun’s lost luggage.’

* Quest completion: 10/10

“Okay, with this it’s finished.”

Ark looked at the iron box and laughed. However, he had to think a bit before finishing the quest.

‘If my guess is right, there is a high chance the substance in the box is related to Magaret’s disease. But if my guess is wrong.....’

The quest from the Seirun workshop would be considered failed if the luggage was opened. Well, Ark didn’t really care about failing the quest. Agathe promised triple the normal rewards, which was 1 gold and 80 silver and 30 extra fame. It wasn’t to the extent that Ark would hesitate.

‘It will be a problem if my relationship with the Seirun workshop becomes hostile.’

Although Agathe threatened him, Ark was the one taking care of the Etins. He could just say the Etins had already plundered the baggage. Since he was the only witness, who could prove that Ark did the crime? However, the Seirun workshop had a lot of influence in the southern region of Bristania. Even if he was acquitted, there was no guarantee what his hostile relationship with the Seirun workshop would cause. Were Magaret and the residents of the slums worth the risk? So he worried about taking back the luggage and just waited. But close just closed his eyes for a moment before shaking his head.

‘It’s not a problem where I can discuss the value.’

He couldn’t give up after thinking about Ronnie.

‘Yes. I’ve already started it. Come, I’ll finish it!’

There was no reason to think about a bad result. If the herb from the Seirun workshop caused the illness then it could cure the residents. If he was wrong and his relationship with the workshop became hostile then he would just have to work to improve it. Who knows? Maybe the Seirun workshop will just decrease their promised additional compensation?

‘Yes, quests in New World don’t just have one ending. If I open the box then I’ll fail the quest but I might be able to receive additional rewards from a different branched quest!’

Kwakwang!

Ark drove his sword into the box. The solid iron box was crushed immediately and the contents flowed out. As he guessed, most of the goods were herbs. Ark confirmed the list of herbs. When he used Ingredient Identification on the quest item, all he could confirm was the name. After confirming the ingredients, he bought the ingredients in Ciel and investigated.

‘My guess is correct!’

After buying the list of ingredients in Ciel, he was able to investigate the ingredients and finally found the element causing the sickness. However, he became even more confused after reading through the information.

‘Eh, wait? This is clearly the cause. But this.....?’

—

“Ah, Ark hyung!”

He heard Ronnie’s voice as soon as he entered the slums. But Ronnie’s expression didn’t look normal. Ronnie’s pale face had tears streaming down it as he clung to Ark.

“Ark hyung, my mother..... Mother.....”

“What’s going on? What’s wrong with your mother?”

“She had a seizure. It’s more severe than yesterday. Tarun ajusshi says there is no chance now.....”

“Damn, while I was out.....!”

Ark grasped Ronnie's hand and hurried into the shack. When he entered through the door, he shrank back from the horrible scream. Magaret was having terrible spasms. From afar, he could see that the whole body was twisted and heated like a fireball. However, Ark was more worried about the black red spots on her body.

'As expected, all Nursing did yesterday was ease Magaret's pain. The unknown sickness is continuing to worsen. And I know from reading the ingredients information that it was most dangerous when the spots turned fully red. In this state, she won't be able to hold on for ten minutes before being unable to breath.'

"Have courage! If you endure just a little bit then you can win against the disease! No, you'll definitely win. I'll do anything to help you live happily with Ronnie again!"

Ark used Nursing continuously but her seizure didn't stop. The unknown sickness had reached the worse stage then even Nursing didn't have an effect.

"Ahh, Ronnie..... Ronnie.....!"

"Mother, Mother!"

'Nursing already doesn't work!'

Ronnie's cries of distress echoed in his ear and he clenched his teeth firmly. If Nursing didn't work then there was only one way left. He had to make a pill before she loses her willpower completely. Ark turned his body and ran to the table. While sweeping everything off the table, he shouted towards Tarun.

"Please bring all your alchemy tools!"

"What? You're going to make the cure now?"

"There is no time to explain! Just do as I say!"

Ark growled at Tarun. Then Tarun turned hesitantly around ran out.

“Ronnie, there’s no time. Go to the magic ingredients store right now and buy me these herbs!”

“But my mother.....”

“I said there is no time!”

Ark wrote down the list of materials from the Seirun box and handed it over before shouting. Of course, Ark had a bunch of materials from the boxes he recovered. However, it was a quest material so he couldn’t use it. So he was going to buy the same ingredients separately. Ronnie shed tears at the yell and ran away.

‘It is surprisingly simple to make the medicine to treat this sickness. It is different to my thoughts of food poisoning. It’s simply poisoning. Of course, the disease has developed beyond simple poisoning after being neglected for so long. But if I have the ingredients then I can use the Food Worshipper’s Herbal Decoction to make the cure. The problem is whether Magaret can hold out until then.’

Ark continuously used Nursing on Margaret. Margaret was in the final stages of the disease so Nursing only had a 1/10 chance of working. Whether in reality or the game, Nursing didn’t work properly because Margaret had suffered for so long that she had given up from weariness. But Ark knew. Even if they were tired with pain, all mothers in existence would be motivated by the magic words.

“If you give up then Ronnie will become an orphan. Do you know? What type of life an orphaned child will have? So far Ronnie had been taking care of you. But you are mistaken if you think he can live well by himself. Ronnie will be even more of an outcast if you give up.....”

Ark clenched his teeth together and continued shouting.

“You are suffering from the disease! Ronnie can’t even boil warm soup! Ronnie is scraping money together just to buy painkillers for you! This is all because of his mother’s presence. Shall I tell you the truth? If you die then Ronnie will also die. Rather, if you give up and die then Ronnie will shortly follow!”

Ark would shout similar words whenever Magaret entered a dangerous situation. Ark's eyes flashed as Magaret responded to his words. Then he bit his lower lip and clenched his fist firmly. Tears suddenly welled in Ark's eyes. Ark's strength came because he remembered his mother's existence. If he was alone then he would be filled with regret and give up without his mother's existence. Even when his flesh and soul became tattered, as a child he instinctively felt like he had to protect his mother. God was an abstract existence. Yet his mother was comparable to a god to him as he devoted his life to her. Ark held back his tears and hugged her.

"Well done. I know. It is painful enough to die. Rather, the pain is so much that you want to die. But you have to put up with it. Please be patient and endure it. Not for your sake but for Ronnie. He is your only child! I'll definitely make sure you get better!"

"Hah, hah, hah, hah!"

Magaret's harsh breathing was her answer.

"Ark hyung!"

Then Ronnie ran in while breathing heavily.

Ark stood up and left her to Ronnie, running to the table. Then he began to combine various ingredients using the tools Tarun lined up. Magaret continued breathing harshly and struggled with her pain. However, Ark blocked his ears and just focused on combining the ingredients.

'I don't have time. If this fails then it is over!'

How much time had passed? The materials which had been separated in the experimental pipe gradually harmonized together. Then it emitted a pale light and the information window appeared.

-You have created the antidote which emits a pale light.

After extracting the various poisonous elements from the herbs, you have succeeded in blending together a cure to the poison. If you use this

antidote then the poison elements were be unravelled.

* However, only the poison from the poisonous herb can be used to decipher an antidote.

“That’s it!”

Ark poured the antidote into a bowl and fed it to Magaret. At that moment, an amazing thing happened. The expression which showed her suffering for over 1 year eased up and the black red spots disappeared. Magaret moaned like she had just awakened from a nightmare and raised the upper part of her body.

“Uh, Mother. The spots.....”

“R-Ronnie, it doesn’t hurt. It doesn’t hurt anymore.”

“Uh, Mother!”

Ronnie shed heavy tears and hugged her. Ark finally sighed and flopped to the ground.

“It’s lucky..... Now all the toxins in her body is dissolving. But please don’t force it for a while. Your body has become quite weak so you should rest for a while.”

At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have healed a sick person who was dying.

Thanks to the nature of Food Worshipper, a special bonus has been given.

<Experience +1000, Fame +70>

‘Hah.....’

Ark looked at the information window with bemusement and laughed. That reminded him of something he had forgotten. Quests,

title and hunting chaotic players. There was also another way to get fame. It was to treat sick people using Food Worshipper. In the past, he also received a considerable amount of fame when treating the Galgin.

“Y-You! What did you do? What the.....?”

Tarun’s mouth dropped as he stuttered. Ark turned around and saw Tarun’s stupid expression. Then he smiled and said.

“Guide me to the other people who caught the mysterious disease.”

Under Tarun’s guidance, Ark treated the sick residents of the slums. Now that he knew the method, treatment was very simple. He used Nursing to help the recuperate then made them eat the antidote. After an hour had passed, Ark managed to treat over 30 sick people in the slums. Surprisingly, he received 30,000 experience and 2100 fame for treating them. That was 10 times more than Ark got in the last two days for the repeatable quests. Thanks to that, Ark managed to gain 1 level and acquire the needed fame. However, Ark didn’t go to the martial arts dojo right away.

There was still work left to do.

Act 3: Caretaker of the People

“Are you ready?”

“Yes!”

Ronnie laughed and nodded his head. Ark and Ronnie were headed towards Ciel. After crossing the shopping centre, Agathe was pacing in front of the Seirun workshop’s door.

“Well, have you finally come?”

“I was a bit late.”

"What's this? Is that an explanation?"

Agathe shouted with a displeased expression.

"I told you it was urgent! If we don't have the ingredients for one day then do you know how much damage the Seirun workshop will receive? A common person like you couldn't possibly imagine it! Damn, I knew I shouldn't have trusted a foreigner. Anyway, that's how it is. Did you find the items?"

"I found them."

"Then it is lucky. Give it to me quickly."

"What if I don't want to?"

Ark scratched the back of his neck and murmured. Then Agathe's face twisted up and he made a ridiculous expression.

"What? You don't want to? What did you say?"

"You heard me. I don't want to."

"What are you doing? Did you break your promise to come back within the time limit because of some unreasonable dislike? Ah, I see. Damn, as expected of a foreigner. I was too busy and just employed anyone but I made a big mistake."

"Is it like that?"

Ark snorted and murmured, causing Agathe to wrinkle his nose like an orangutan and said.

"Now give me the box with the Seirun trademark stamped on it. Even if you are a foreigner in Bristania, you can't just run around wildly! If you don't take it out immediately then I'll call the guards to grab you!"

"Guards..... That's not a bad idea. Please do it."

"What, what the?"

Agathe flinched at Ark's retort and closed his mouth. Then Ark grinned and muttered.

"What's wrong? I thought you were calling the guards."

"Yes. What are you thinking.....?"

"Why? Do what you want and call them! Why aren't you calling them? Is it a problem if the guards are called? It would be difficult if the guard checks the contents of the box....."

"T-that's impossible!"

"Ah, did I get a bullseye?"

Ark smirked and murmured. Then Agathe made a puzzled expression and his countenance changed.

"You, did you open the box?"

"Then?"

"That is an obvious violation of the contract!"

"Yes, I admit it. Alas, I have committed a serious sin. I broke a promise so I should be punished..... Therefore call the guards. Let's call them in order to distinguish between right and wrong."

"Don't make me laugh. You think that you discovered a weakness just because you saw the contents of the box. The contents are 100% safe and have no faults. We produce potions for the entire southern area of Bristania and even the royal family recognizes our goods....."

"Shut up, you bastard."

Ark used his specialty of changing completely by 180 degrees. Ark's face seemed to turn demonic as curses emerged from his mouth. After experiencing a level 366 Intimidation, Agathe's face turned as pale as a sheet. Ark stepped closer and growled.

“Okay, I admit it. I examined the contents. The potions that Seirun makes is 100% safe. While it is safe for people who use it, it isn’t safe for the people who make the potion!”

Agathe was silenced Ark’s words. Yes, Ark had figured out the secret of Seirun workshop.

-Karadaras Claw

The Karadaras claw is a deadly poisonous herb found at the Karadaras ravine which resembles a claw. The herb is so poisonous that a troll will die one day after inhaling it too much.

Advanced Additional Information: When the Karadaras Claw is refined through the appropriate process, it can be very useful when combined with various herbs. But if you inhale the aroma or touch the deadly poison, it may cause fatal symptoms inside the body.

When exposed to that environment for a long time, a person will suffer from serious toxic symptoms. The typical symptoms is accompanied by high fever, pain, and black red spots. If the spots become completely red then it will lead to death.

This was the information that Ark confirmed from the items in the box. The secret ingredient in the popular potions sold throughout the southern Bristania was the Karadaras Claw. Of course, Ark knew about the poisonous herb thanks to Food Worshipper. Of course, the Karadaras claws within the potion were perfectly refined so they were completely safe. It was common knowledge that the production of canned goods got rid of a variety of toxic chemicals such as hydrochloric acid during the process. However, the labourers who handled the Karadaras claws weren’t completely safe. Because of that, Ark was puzzled after he confirmed the poisonous herb. When investigating the cause of the mysterious disease, he thought it was because of an error in the manufacturing process.

But when he examined the contents, the mysterious illness wasn’t caused by a simple mistake. They were slowly poisoned by inhaling the

toxins emitted by the Karadaras claw! As the owner of Seirun workshop, Agathe should know that. If there was a mistake in the herb combination process then it would obviously become poisoned! It was impossible not to know the poisonous plant was dangerous. However, the people who worked in the workshop were poisoned by the Karadaras claw. Even if the appropriate safety measures were taken, the residents of the slums should've at least be given antidotes so they wouldn't suffer any pain. However, Agathe wasn't visibly interested.

'Does he not care if the residents of the slums are killed?'

Sparks rose from Ark's eyes as he had a crazy idea. This guy couldn't be forgiven!

"You are misunderstanding something....."

Sweat dripped down Agathe's face as he stuttered.

"W-what do you want? As expected, is it money? Okay, then I'll do it. If you hold your tongue then I'll give you 500 gold, no, 1000 gold. How about it? Huh? It is a huge amount that a commoner like you can't never see in your entire life. Isn't this the reason why you came? Just sit back, close your mouth and you'll get 1000 gold."

"I said shut up you bastard."

Ark growled and Agathe flinched back, thinking that he was going to be hit. But Ark just sighed and shook his head. In fact, the residents of the slums wanted to rush here to kill Agathe when they heard. The person who stopped it was Ark. Ark determined that it wouldn't be useful for the residents to kill Agathe. So he persuaded the residents to allow him to go talk to Agathe.

"Okay I will not tell the guards."

"R-Really?"

"Instead, there are three conditions."

“Conditions?”

“The residents who suffered in the meantime should receive 1000 gold consolation money while the ones unjustly fired should be rehired at three times the salary. Of course, this is after the perfect safety precautions is taken, which is the first condition.”

This was one of the reasons why Ark stopped the poor residents. Although the residents of the slums were relieved of their pain thanks to Ark, their living situation had suffered thanks to the price of the medicine. Even if they recovered their health, there was no possibility of Agathe rehiring them. So he devised a way for the residents to live.

“W-what? What did you just say? If I pay that consolation money than the Seirun workshop will perish immediately!”

“Yes, that’s it. The circumstances don’t matter. When you think about it, the residents of the slums were going to die.”

“T-that.....”

Agathe made a firm expression and shook his head.

“That condition is unacceptable! I can’t allow Seirun to perish!”

“Well, you control the entire southern region of Bristania so it is difficult to imagine that you can be ruined by just that.”

“What?”

“The Seirun workshop is important to Ciel so maybe I should tell the King of Bristania instead of the guards? What would happen to Seirun then?”

“You cheeky fellow. Do you think the King of Bristania will believe the words of a mere foreigner like you? No, do you think you can even appear in front of His Majesty?”

Agathe suddenly hit back strongly. If the problem expanded then there was no guarantee of Seirun's safety even if he had the King's ear. Agathe would immediately receive punishment. However, there were various high ranking officials in Ciel who were susceptible to bribes. It was possible for him to stop the words of the poor and a foreigner from reaching the King's ear using his connections.

"Ark-nim has the qualifications!"

Suddenly someone's voice was heard from inside the alley. Confusion spread across Agathe's face who turned around.

"What the? What bastard, huck, you?"

"Yes. I am the branch manager of Ciel's Magic Institute, Rabent."

It was the magician in the Magic Institute that Ark met when he first came to Ciel who said he was a fan of Ark. Rabent nodded towards Ark and began to talk again.

"Although I don't know everything that is going on, Ark-nim is a member of the Magic Institute with a good standing."

"M-member of the Magic Institute? The guy who looked for the transporter's luggages?"

"Ark's character is someone who can't ignore it when he sees someone in trouble."

Rabent said as he once again sent Ark a respectful look. He had completely misunderstood Ark. After all....

"It is his character that made him work at the slums. Before Ark-nim came here, he dropped by the Magic Institute and told me most of the circumstances. It is quite a serious act. If Agathe-nim refuses this request then Ark will use his qualification as a full member of the Magic Institute to draw attention to this matter. Will Agathe-nim be okay if that happens? I'm talking about my Master. He does have some influence in Bristania."

Agathe's face turned white and terrified at the magician's words.

"After hearing about the injustices of Seirun workshop, I'm honestly ashamed that the Magic Institute traded with you. I'm a mere branch manager so I can't fathom how much anger my Master would feel."

Fury flickered in Rabent's eyes as he looked at Agathe with contempt.

"But if Agathe-nim accepts the polite request of Ark-nim who cares about the plight of the poor then I will bury this fact. I'll speak clearly. This isn't for Agathe-nim but because of my respect for Ark-nim who cares deeply about the poor."

Ark hadn't known it until now but only 20 users who received the title of 'Magic Institute Member' and no more than 500 NPCs. Therefore, the Master of the Magic Institute had a special interest and affection for those members. And this was the magic kingdom, where the Magic Institute's influence was stronger than anywhere else.

'Indeed, it is great that I know someone high ranking.'

Ark suddenly realized the importance of connections. Without even needing to go to the Master, Agathe completely gave up as soon as he heard Ark was a full member of the Magic Institute.

"Now, will you accept the conditions?"

Agathe started talking politely as he realized who was holding the sword. Ark gestured towards Rabent and thanked him for helping before continuing.

"What do you say? That is just the first condition."

"Then what's the second condition?"

"Pay me 2000 gold."

"W-what?"

“That’s the fee and the costs of the ingredients for treating the residents of the slums. I’ll tell you in advance, but don’t think about accusing me of anything. Frankly, I think I should get 10,000 gold for my efforts. But after consulting with Rabent, he told me that it really would be a problem if Seirun workshop collapses. Do you understand? This is the limit of what I know Seirun can pay.”

Ark replied with a wicked grin. No matter the situation, Ark still took any opportunity to do some business. He knew that Agathe would decisively refuse the initial 1000 gold. After twisting the sword in, Ark used the opportunity to get compensation for the poor as well as 2000 gold for himself. He had originally decided on 1000 gold. However, Seirun really couldn’t be allowed to collapse so Ark managed to grasp the full range of Seirun’s assets from Rabent. When Ark presented the offer of 1000 gold for the poor and 2000 for Ark, he had taken into full account the maximum amount Seirun could afford. Since even his assets were identified, Agathe declared defeat while sweating.

“Fine. I’ll pay the compensation. But I can’t pay the money immediately or Seirun really will collapse. Shouldn’t you already know that if you grasped the full extent of my assets? I’ll divide the compensation into 3 and pay every two months. If you don’t accept that then I can’t do anything.”

Ark smiled at Agathe’s suggestion and nodded.

“That’s not a bad idea. Of course you will write a contract. If you don’t keep the agreement than the Magic Institute will seize Seirun and distribute its assets to the slum residents and me.”

“How cruel!”

“I don’t want to hear those words from you.”

Ark said with a smirk. After threatening Agathe, he received two contracts. One for Ark and one for the poor residents.

“Now, you should work diligently to pay off your debts.”

Ark shook the contract and laughed, causing Agathe to grind his teeth. Just as Ark was turning around, he hesitated and said.

“Oh, I forgot to tell you the third condition!”

“W-what? I don’t have anything else to give!”

“Why are you so startled? Don’t worry. I’m not asking for more money. Just to borrow your face.”

“Borrow my face?”

Agathe asked in a puzzled voice. Ark lifted his finger and pulled Agathe’s face down. Once it reached a suitable height, he smiled and spoke to Ronnie.

“Ronnie it’s your turn.”

Ppak-!

“Ugh!”

Ronnie bent down ran into his face like a missile. Agathe fell to the ground with a bloody face. While Agathe rolled around holding his nose, Ark squatted down beside him and said.

“Is this really okay?”

Ronnie nodded with a stoic expression and replied.

“Yes.”

“Fine, if you are satisfied with that.”

Ark praised Ronnie and stroked his hair.

“Do you understand? Apart from your mother who almost died, none of the other residents were in a really severe state. Only your mother was in a serious situation. That is because she endured the symptoms and continued working even after being punished by the Karadaras claw.

Even when it wasn't possible to move, she clenched her teeth and endured it."

Ark grabbed Ronnie's shoulder tightly and emphasized his words.

"It was for you. So that you could be proud of her. And she is proud of you."

"Ark hyung."

Ronnie embraced Ark while crying. Ark comforted Ronnie and returned to the slums. The slum residents passed the written contract among them before Tarun opened his mouth.

"How did this.....?"

"It's not a big deal. After visiting the Seirun workshop and telling them about your difficulties with the disease, Agathe willingly wrote the contract."

Ark didn't explain everything to the residents of the slums. Anyway, the poor would have to work for Seirun again if they wanted to make a living so it wouldn't help if they knew everything about Agathe and became stubborn. After the whole incident was amicably resolved, the residents gathered around Ronnie.

"Meanwhile, I'm very sorry."

"We acted like that around you without knowing the circumstances....."

"You don't have to say anything. I don't expect you to forgive us."

"It's okay. My mother is healthy so that's enough."

Ronnie sniffled and replied in a cheerful voice. The watching Ark just laughed.

'Yes, it is this boy.'

Ark couldn't help laughing at his expression and nodded. In fact, Ark thought that Ronnie's heart was too good after watching him with Agathe. If Ark was in the same situation then he would've halfway killed him already. However, Ark and Ronnie were different. The too mature child just head butted Agathe to relieve his anger and he easily forgave the residents of the slums who had bothered him. Ark was completely different.

'Well, I got a share so this much is fine.'

Ark watched the residents of the slums and then stealthily withdrew. This time he started the work with really pure intentions. Although he extracted 2000 gold from Agathe, he had no intention of receiving anything from the poor residents. That's why Ark sneaked out of the slums. After a while, Tarun looked around restlessly and ran up to Ark and grasped his hands.

"Wait, where are you going?"

"My business is already finished. I also have some other work to do....."

"Why are you saying such upsetting things? Do you think we're scum. You saved us. Not just from the sick but also from poverty. I realized a lot of things after seeing you. Treating the sick requires more than medical knowledge. You really are a true caretaker!"

There was a lively sound effect and an information window he never even considered appeared.

-The Miracle Nursing was successful.

Taking care of the sick doesn't just require Nursing. A true caretaker won't just think about the sick person but also the ones suffering apart from the sick. In some sense, the surrounding people are the sick are also suffering. They suffer because their loved one is sick and also from economic problems. Thanks to thinking beyond the pain of the sick to the people around them, you have reached enlightenment.

Not only did you save the sick person, but the people around them. The people of the slums were starving from the costs of medicine and their lives became more difficult until you helped them. Thus there is a deep gratitude in their hearts and they thank you for allowing them to live again.

In their minds, that is a true caretaker. It is a valuable compensation. You've instilled hope in the dozens of sick people and those around them, causing a true miracle. Thanks to this achievement, you have become a true paragon of a caretaker and have reached a higher level.

* Due to the success of miracle nursing, all stats increase by 2.

* The Affection stat increased by 40.

* Fame increased by 200.

* Alignment to good increased by 100

-The Miracle Nursing was a success and you have acquired the title 'Caretaker of the People.'

Your fame as a Caretaker has increased, so you will receive praises from many patients.

* As a title bonus, all stats increase by 2.

* Fame increased by 200.

'Ha, this is also Nursing?' Ark looked at the information window with amazement.

'When I begged it didn't appear but now it appear after the situation is over..... This system is really irritating.'

But it really was fortunate after he thought about it. If Miracle Nursing happened then Magaret might've been rescued more quickly. However, he wouldn't have been able to help the other sick people. The slum residents would still be suffering and Ronnie would still be an

outcast. Of course, Ark also wouldn't have received the perk of 2000 gold.

"Ark hyung, the village uncles want to cook a meal for hyung."

At that time, Ronnie came running. Therefore, Ark missed the chance to disappear beautifully like the main character of a movie. Although they weren't that well off, the slum residents wanted to thank their benefactor. They took out some beef jerky and a bottle of cheap booze. He was also surrounded by poor people who couldn't wash properly. But it wasn't bad. No, he was in a very good mood as he watched the festivities.

"Isn't this like a miracle? Being able to taste this beef jerky and drink alcohol is a miracle."

The people around him laughed as Ark tried to eat the really chewy beef jerky.

'Huhuhu, now my work in Ciel is ended.'

Ark walked to the centre of Ciel and laughed. While he helped Ronnie for other reasons, he also received significant benefits from it.

Putting aside the 2000 gold he would receive from Agathe, doing repeatable quests for 2 days only gave him 300 fame. But helping the slum residents for 1 day gave him 2100 fame! In addition, he did some repeatable quests to get information and received 40 fame. But was that all? It was slightly unexpected but Miracle Nursing occurred after everything was finished and he received an additional 400 fame. That's a total of 2,540 fame in just one day!

Thanks to that, Ark's current fame was 8,565! Even if he learned the secret technique that cost 7000 fame, he would still have 1565 left! And Miracle Nursing also increased all his stats by 4. To receive this much rewards in a low level town! Whenever he received a title from Miracle Nursing, he always received a stat increase between 2~5. This time the bonus gained was 4 stats. That meant the 'Caretaker of the People' title was hard to get.

‘Anyway, I’ve spent 3 days in Ciel. The immortality pill I entrusted to the Magic Institute has around seven hours remaining. I can learn the secret technique, test its function and then return to check the performance of the pill. Now, shall I go learn the skill?’

Ark headed towards the martial arts dojo with high hopes.

‘Eh? What is this?’

Ark walked the streets of Ciel with an embarrassed expression. The atmosphere in Ciel was now subtly different from when he disconnected at dawn. In particular, the common scene of villagers looking at him and then whispering caught his eye. Although he felt uncomfortable, Ark ignored this and headed towards the dojo. When Ark entered, the hobbit immediately came running.

“Ohh, you have come. I’ve been waiting since I’ve heard the news.”

“The news?”

“You don’t know? You’re a celebrity in Ciel now. Didn’t you help the poor residents of the slums? Although everything is being kept secret, people know that the sickness was somehow related to Seirun workshop and you came and solved it.”

The hobbit approached and whispered.

“As a matter of fact, Agathe from the Seirun workshop is someone who blatantly shows off his wealth and looks down on people so nobody really likes him. So news as spread that you punished Agathe.”

‘Ah, then the residents.....’

Ark now knew why the Ciel residents were gawking at him. While Ark disconnected for 4 hours, that was 12 hours to an NPC. Ciel was right next to the slums, so in that time rumours had spread and reached the ears of the hobbit who looked at Ark and said.

“My eyes were definitely correct. You are a good person who doesn’t permit injustice so you are qualified to learn the founder’s secret technique. Finally the founder’s secret technique can be passed on!”

The hobbit praised Ark and gave him a thumbs up. The unreserved compliments turned his face slightly red. Although he blabbed on about ‘legend....,’ Ark disregarded it as he focused on learning the secret technique.

‘Now I can finally learn it.’

Ark approached the statue with an expectant face. Just like before, the statue rotated and a scroll appeared. A message window appeared in his head when he picked up the scroll.

-Thanks to ‘Pursuit of Truth,’ you have acquired a new lore skill.

<Lore skill that can be acquired: Entrusted Volumes>

* 7000 fame is necessary to learn this skill.

Do you want to learn it?

Did that question even need to be asked? How much trouble did he go through to learn this skill?

He accepted with a cheerful voice and the scroll unwound and rolled around Ark. At the same time, a three dimensional hobbit sitting cross legged appeared beside him. Then he murmured at an incredible fast pace like a tape had been forwarded x4. It was all to pass down the Entrusted volumes. After the simple even finished, the skill information window appeared.

-You have learnt a new skill thanks to Pursuit of Truth.

Entrusted Volumes (Special, Active): A long time ago, the hobbit master known for his kung fu skills used this training technique. This technique sacrifices a portion of health and makes it explode in a concentrated blast. The result of Entrusted Volumes depends on three different

elements which will determine the various special abilities. So this Lore skill relies on luck. In a critical moment, the founder hobbit received a bad outcome and died as a result.

So the hobbit founder passed down this technique to the next generation.

<Lottery Attack standby time: 5 minutes

Health consumed: 500>

It is possible to use no matter what weapon is equipped.

‘Eh? What is this?’

Ark’s face distorted strangely at the information window. Ark had believed the skill would have extravagant destructive power after hearing the hobbit was legendary. But he didn’t see that when he read the skill information. Yet the specific attack and damage was determined by a lottery? In addition, the founder died because a bad result came out? Wasn’t this an unlucky secret technique? No, looking at the details it was different from kung fu. Ark thought it would be a martial arts technique thanks to the ‘Kwon’ character in the name. The ‘Kwon’ referred to a book, not a kung fu technique.

‘Did I go through all this effort to raise my fame just to learn a skill like this?’

His head turned white with anger.

“I thought he was a hero who used kung fu techniques?”

“Hero? What do you mean?”

The hobbit tilted his head to one side and asked with confusion.

“You’re the one who said it. Wasn’t the founder of the dojo a legendary kung fu master? Didn’t he defeat the devil with his kung fu?”

“What did you say? I never said that. I said that the founder was famous for his luck which could either have a good effect or be so unlucky that he was stabbed by the devil.”

“What? That’s not.....”

Ark was about to shout when he flinched and shut his mouth. Ark realised that he had been thinking about it the wrong way. Although Ark was now accustomed to the Bristania language, when he met the hobbit the first time his degree of understanding was only at 10. So he couldn’t understand the important parts and put together a scenario based on what he heard.

‘Oh my god, then.....’

That’s right. This happened because of the language communication problem. As expected, he should’ve spent money when needed. If he had bought the dictionary which gave him 100% understanding of the Bristania language then this wouldn’t have happened. Although he had built up all that fame during the last two days, he blew it all on a secret technique like this.

‘Oooh, my 7000 fame!’

Ark shook his head.

‘No, it’s still too early to be disappointed. I can’t judge the skill from the information window as it did require 7000 fame to learn. The skill might turn out to be surprisingly useable.’

Ark considered this and exited the town.

Chweeek, chweeek! When he entered the surrounding forest, the Kobolds immediately flocked to him. They were level 200 kobold. They were a suitable opponent to test the power of the Entrusted Volumes skill.

“Okay, shall I begin? Entrusted Volumes!”

Ark ran up to the kobold and used the skill. Then there was an intense flash and something like a slot machine appeared. There were various icons drawn on the three divided slots. The icons slowly changed until with a tak, tak, tak, it stopped. Then a huge fanfare like sound effect was heard and the information window appeared.

-The power of the Entrusted Volumes has been used.* Results

【Properties】 : <Pacifist> 【Alignment】 : <Warrior> 【 Environment】 : <Forest>

The attack method selected is the 'Byong Hammer.' (Squeaky toy hammer)

<The Byong Hammer effect will be applied to your weapon for 3 minutes>

'Byong hammer? What is this?'

Ark looked at the information window with confusion. What kind of effect was it? Judging by the name along, he couldn't get a sense of its effect. But he didn't worry about it too much because he could soon know the effects. The skill was activated and the Gwisal's sword turned into a huge hammer.

"Hik, t-this is!"

It wasn't only the appearance that changed.

Byong byong byong byong!

Whenever a kobold was attacked by the Byong hammer, it would make a squeaky sound. It also only did 1 damage.

'What, this absurd skill..... Who on earth would use such a skill?'

Ark started at the stupid hammer and muttered. What use would a Byong hammer be against monsters brandishing a sword or mace? It was really lucky that they were level 200 kobolds. If his sword turned

into a hammer against high level monsters than he would be beaten to death.

‘No, I still don’t know all the uses of Entrusted Volume. There might be another kind of special effect. Yes, since it depended on luck there could be a good or bad effect. Maybe the Byong Hammer is the worst effect.’

He wanted to believe that. But Ark made a hopeless face the next time he used Entrusted Volumes. When the Byong hammer effect faded, he used it once again and received the ‘Braggart’ effect. Ark thought that the ‘Braggart’ effect was finally the right one when he saw the effects.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

It happened every time he swung his sword. A huge flash and deafening cry would occur. It was an absurd special effect!

‘Ohh, the damage seems to be incredibly high! As expected, this Entrusted Volumes skill is amazing! Just by looking, my damage seems to have risen incredibly high!’

Whenever he swung it, his sword flashed and roared! Ark looked at his sword with a proud expression. However, Ark saw that the kobolds were still composed from his attacks. Although there were really spectacular special effects, the kobolds actually only received 1 damage. Yes, just like the name the special effects were just a bluff to scare off the opponent. The skills after that weren’t much different from Byong hammer or Braggart. They were special effects that had no use in battle! Of course, some of the special effects could be used.

For 3 minutes, ‘Goblin Punch’ had a 50% chance of causing ‘Push’ or ‘Stun.’ The ‘Vile Thief’ was an effect which made monsters drop 1 copper and other similar effects. However, it was a lottery so none of the effects had a 100% chance of appearing. There was only a 10% chance of getting a good effect. In the case of the Goblin Punch, monsters were only pushed back 1~2 metres and Stun only lasted for 1~2 seconds. In addition, the ‘Vile Thief’ skill only applied to monsters who had money. And even if he gathered 100 copper, wasn’t that only 1 silver? That

wasn't the entire problem. Entrusted Volumes was a skill that consumed health instead of mana. It consumed 500 health with each use! If he used it three or four times then he would lose 1500~2000 health. After testing it a few times, he only had 1000 health. He could use it for fun against the kobolds. However, against a high levelled monster who knew what losing 500 health would do?

"Oh my god! This is an event skill!"

That was Ark's conclusion after using Entrusted Volumes. Just like a profession, there were two types of skills. One was the typical production or combat related skill while the other was a unique skill created for events or fun. The Entrusted Volumes was the second type. Certainly Entrusted Volumes was quite an interesting skill. But that was it. It was interesting but no help in combat. Of course, there were helpful skills like Goblin Punch. However, the skill consumed so much of his health that it was not useable.

"What did I grind fame for....."

Ark almost collapsed with disappointment. Anger welled up. But Ark didn't consider one simple fact. Why the Entrusted Volumes skill was so shabby compared to the Ghost Knight Corps skill. If it required 1000 more fame to learn then was it just a simple event skill? Ark hadn't discovered it yet but there was a secret hidden in the Entrusted Volumes skill! But Ark didn't know that so he felt like crying.

Ddiririri ddiririri.

While Ark was busy being frustrated, he suddenly heard a familiar sound. It wasn't a sound in the game. It was the telephone ringtone in reality.

"What, in the morning?"

Who would be calling my house in the morning? Ark was in a 100% upset mode so he petulantly disconnected from the unit.

"Hello."

Ark said when there was suddenly a scream in his ear.

“Hyun-woo, there’s trouble.”

Act 4: Start of a Long Festival

“Surround the assault troops and attack!”

“Wah ah ah ah!”

Hundreds of Nakujuk rushed forward at the command. Swords, spears and arrows flew like a shower towards a huge presence shaped like a giant lion. The golden lion radiated an overwhelming presence which reached over dozens of metres and covered the Nakujuk.

Kuaaang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The golden lion roared and slammed its paw into the ground, causing the earth to tear and shake. Where the paw pressed against the ground, 10 Nakujuk were crushed instantly. It was an intense feeling of overwhelming power! But it couldn’t exert its full power thanks to the number of opponents. Despite being stepped on and crushed, the Nakujuk continued attacking. Some brave Nakujuk climbed the body of the golden lion and slashed it with their spears. The golden lion’s body was covered with a fur stronger than steel which functioned as its armour. The spears that hit only did 20~30 damage at most. However, there were hundreds of Nakujuk surrounding the lion. Even though each person only did 20~30 damage, it combined together to reach 5000~8000 damage. Thanks to that, the golden lion was in dreadful shape but it still hadn’t lost its fighting spirit.

“It really is a bastard. It has already been 30 minutes since the battle started. In the meantime, more than 300000 have been damaged.....”

The man inside an armour with an eerie pattern embossed on it shook his head. Then an old man wearing a hood said.

"This is one of the guys who once drove back the forces of darkness. This much is natural."

"The forces of darkness?"

"That's right. Rather, it's quite weak now compared to then. Maybe it's because the dimension is different. You probably feel it too. Here mana recovers several times slower than on middle earth."

"Come to think of it....."

He abruptly stopped and confirmed his mana. He had previously used 50% of his mana. Usually it would take 15~20 minutes tops to recover. But now he had only recovered up to 75%. His mana recovery was two times slower than when he was on middle earth.

"That is because your source of mana is far away. From the moment that monster was born, its existence had breathed in mana. Although it isn't much, that lessening of mana density caused its power to weaken. If this was middle earth where the mana density is doubled then I wouldn't have dared fight it using this number of Nakujuk. We're fortunate."

The old man raised his hood and laughed. The old man covered in wrinkles looked a hundred years old! The old man holding a stick of bones was the archbishop of the Asyeosu church, Maseutyu. And the knight wearing the black armour was Alan.

"Then it would be many times stronger in middle earth?"

Alan stared at the gold lion with surprised eyes after hearing Maseutyu's explanation. Currently Alan was in the dimension called 'Scale.' Two months before Alan came to Scale, he had met Maseutyu and changed jobs to a Ruin Knight after swearing revenge on Ark. In the meantime, he had been improving his capabilities because he acknowledged that Ark was a powerful opponent. After learning the special skills of a Ruin Knight, his confidence had increased and then the Red Man appeared in front of Alan. Then the Red Man told Alan some amazing secrets about New World. After revealing the secrets, the Red Man had asked for Alan's help. After thinking for a while, Alan had

accepted. Although the Red Man's ultimate goal was unknown, he decided to cooperate since Ark was their enemy. The Red Man's first command was to make the 'Scale' dimension rise to middle earth. In order for Alan to achieve this, the Red Man created a 'spatial-temporal' tunnel to allow him to enter Scale.

Scale was originally an area which belong to middle earth. But when the Dark Lord triggered his final destruction magic, a number of areas controlled by the world trees sank. Just like Seutandal, if Scale's world tree was resurrected then it could return to middle world. In other words, Alan had to resurrect Scale's world tree! But Alan had bumped into a wall after he came to Scale.

'I never thought it would be so difficult to cause a different dimension to rise.....'

Alan hadn't known this until he heard Maseutyu's words, but Yggdrasil and Yuzuria were the weakest among the world trees. After the Dark Lord used his final destruction magic, their weaker magic meant that they received less damage and didn't sink that far. However, there was still an undisclosed number of world trees. The deity who created the world was called the father and mother of the world. But when talking about the game settings, this was actually related to the episodes. The 'Scale' dimension occurred in a later episode than Seutandal so the degree of difficulty was higher. The monsters in Scale had an average level of 400. Although it was rare, some level 500 monsters was also visible. But the problem was not the monsters. The biggest obstacle to Alan's resurrection of the world tree was the guardian of the world tree.

'It is a level 950 guardian monster, the Beast Dragon Baras!'

Although the name was Beast Dragon Baras, it took the shape of a golden lion. Even though he used 50 『Penetration』 scrolls, he barely found any information about it. But the Beast Dragon Baras was not a monster but a high ranking NPC. In other words, if Scale was recovered again then it would give quests to users instead of being an opponent. However, the NPCs reacted different to users depending on their alignment. Especially towards Alan who was a Ruin Knight.

-Foreigner, there is a dark smell coming from your body. There is an endless hatred towards the world within your body! I can't allow a scoundrel like you with evil intentions to approach the world tree!

The Beast Dragon Baras became hostile as soon as he saw Alan. But Maseutyu knew the 'secret of the world' from the Red Man and already expected such a situation. When Alan had used the spatial-temporal tunnel to enter Scale, Maseutyu mobilized the Nakujuk who had sword allegiance to the Red Man. After the Beast Dragon saw through Alan's identity, they attacked without hesitation.

-These guys.....!

Kwaaaaah-!

While Alan was recalling the past, the Beast Dragon had opened some huge wings and flew away. It judged that there were too many Nakujuk and that a ground battle would be disadvantageous. But that was the moment Alan had been waiting for.

"Now! This is a chance for the strike force to stop his movements!"

Although shouted towards the demonic beasts hiding behind the steep mountain slope. Dozens of winged demonic beasts flew towards the Beast Dragon and threw a black net over it. Despite causing a storm and trying to move upwards, the Beast Dragon was immobile! It was tangled in the black net and fell to the ground.

-The Beast Dragon Baras was caught in the 'net of corruption!'

<The net will last for 10 minutes and consume 100 mana every 10 seconds. Movement speed and attack speed reduced by 30%>

-Ugh, what, what the, this net is sucking my power.....

When the Beast Dragon struggled and groaned, Maseutyu laughed and said.

“Huhuhuhu, have you already forgotten? Try to remember. We caught you hundreds of years ago using the ‘net of corruption.’ The curse magic weaved into the net was conceived during the 100 years of darkness.”

-Curse magic weaved into the net you made! Then you expected.....!

“You’re still slow. Yes, the descendant of the great darkness.”

-Oh my god..... The cursed prophecy.....

The Beast Dragon stumbled and groaned like it had received an impact. But after a brief moment, the Beast Dragon raised its head violently and roared.

-No, that prophecy can never come true! Even if this is decided by fate, this Beast Dragon Baras won’t let it come true! The existence of the darkness will eat everything up! The dark forces will die in this place!

The Beast Dragon then opened its mouth, causing the surrounding air to swirl and be sucked in. Alan and Beseutyu were 100 metres away and they were still sucked in by the destructive force! It was the worst weapon the Beast Dragon could use. The Beast Dragon had the attribute of the forest and the earth, and its breath melted everything it touched. While an elite level 950 NPC used it, it was impossible for the level 300 Nakujuk to resist. In addition, the wide area effect spread over hundreds of metres so there was nowhere for the Nakujuk to run. However, Maseutyu’s eyes lit up with delight.

“Now, Alan! Do it!”

Alan rushed forward like an arrow and shot off a black ball. The black ball emitted a sinister aura as it flew forward. Then it was drawn forward by the vortex and entered the Beast Dragon’s mouth. The Beast Dragon flinched and stepped backwards, before he screamed painfully and rolled across the ground.

“Cough, t-this is..... Kuaaaak!

“Hahaha, you fool! Yes, this is the dark energy from the Devil’s Jewel. Do I need to explain what the Devil’s Jewel is? Your power will soon be used to solve the problems of the great darkness!”

Maseutyu shouted with an insane light in his eyes. The Devil’s Jewel was what Alan had used to build up his power in the hideout. When he drove it into the body of a specific monster, it had the effect of absorbing its power. Then the Ruin Knight was able to absorb the powers within the Devil’s Jewel.

“Alan, it’s time to stop that guy’s breath!”

At Maseutyu’s words, Alan took out his sword and started participating in the battle. When Alan appeared, the dark aura strengthened. It was the special effect of a Ruin Knight, ‘Ruin Spirit.’ Under the effect of Ruin Spirit, the eyes of the Nakujuk and demonic beasts turned mad. Thanks to Ruin Spirit, his troops only cared about death and destruction. It was a skill which increased attack and aggressiveness instead of defense! The Nakujuk and demonic beasts developed a murderous intent and ran enthusiastically up to the Beast Dragon.

-You! For the peace of mankind.....!

The Beast Dragon who only had 2% health left ran up to Alan. Alan was a villain who was threatening the peace of mankind after centuries.

“Berserk activate! Desire for Survival! Absolute Anger!”

Berserk was a skill which amplified hatred and increase attack by 5% for 20 minutes! Desire for Survival also increased defense by 50% for 20 minutes! Both of these weren’t a Ruin Knight’s skills. It was the skill option attached to the ‘Plated Gauntlets of Corrupted Hatred’ and ‘Steel Shield of Despair’ items that Ark sold him. Alan was also wearing the ‘Helmet of Hatred’ which reflected all attacks by 30% so he attacked recklessly. When the three options were activated, Alan was covered in a dark red special effect which rendered his body not visible. It was the set effect of equipping three items with hatred!

“.....Three effects at the same time is not a joke.”

Alan looked with satisfaction at the effect of the overlapping skills. However, the opponent was an elite level 950 NPC! Just a swipe from the Beast Dragon's claw decreased his health by 40%. However there were dozens of demonic monsters so his health recovered instantly using 'Touch of Darkness.' When Alan judged that the degree of damage and recovery was balanced than he approached the Beast Dragon and used various skills.

"The lesser demon skill 'Disruption,' sword skill 'Frenzied Sword Dance'!"

He used all the skills he learn via the Devil's Jewel without stopping. The hundreds of Nakujuk and demonic monsters continued the battle that had lasted for over 30 minutes, and the Beast Dragon's 2% health gradually fell. After the Beast Dragon's body was torn to pieces, Alan's sword stole its last breath and it collapsed.

-Your level has risen.
-Your level has risen.
-Your level has risen.....

When the Beast Dragon collapsed, Alan gained 9 levels at once. It wasn't only Alan. The cross signs appeared over the heads of the remaining Nakujuk and demonic beasts and they all gained 9 levels. The experience from the level 950 Beast Dragon NPC was enormous as it was enough to raise the level of all Nakujuk and demonic monsters who participated in the battle.

"Phew, he really is a strong bastard."

Alan looked at his armour which became ragged after only a few minutes and sighed. But despite the difficulty, there was no other price. As well as experience, the Beast Dragon also dropped a few rare items. But first Maseutyu took out the Devil's Jewel which had absorbed the power of the Beast Dragon.

“It was that difficult when it was already weak. This is just to resurrect the Scale world tree so the guardians in the future will be even more difficult. But you don’t have to worry. These guys are strong but you will also become stronger. Although the amount of power the Devil’s Jewel can absorb is limited, you will become much stronger with the essence of the guardian. This is the reason why he entrusted this to you.”

“.....But will the other side be okay?”

Alan asked as he took the Devil’s Jewel. Maseutyu tilted his head to one side and asked.

“The other side?”

“The Red Man. We came with a large group of Nakujuk and somehow defeated the guardian but didn’t he go alone to a different dimension? Although there are a number of world trees, wouldn’t they all have guardians defending it?”

Maseutyu chuckled and answered Alan’s question.

“Heh, you don’t have to worry about him. Don’t you remember the prophecy the Beast Dragon previously spoke about? Before the Dark Lord fell, he left a cursed prophecy. And he is the ‘Executor’ who will carry out that prophecy! Of course his body is still incomplete but he has already gained the dark heritage, the aerial fortress Rwigenberg. No, I imagine that he could accomplish the goal even without the Rwigenberg.”

Maseutyu’s eyes were filled with the light of respect. For the dark NPC to trust the Red Man, what was his true identity? Alan thought for a bit and asked again.

“Then why didn’t that person resurrect the other world tree?”

“Until now, he still hasn’t completely awakened his full abilities. There is also another reason. If he visited now than he could defeat the guardian and resurrect Scale’s world tree. But he previously needed the Sacred Branch in order to resurrect Seutandal’s world tree Yuzuria. And

that was an artifact which sprouted from the world tree Yggdrasil. So he tried to revive Yuzuria, the most complicated one first."

"But wasn't Ark the one who resurrected it?"

"That's because he made it happen."

Alan's forehead wrinkled at Maseutyu's answer. Then Ark had just been used by the Red Man in that video? Complicated problems rose in Alan's chest at the thought. Ark was Alan's arch rival. He was an enemy that Alan would step on and make miserable one day! Ark's misfortune made Alan happy. However, he felt something strange at the thought of Ark being used by the Red Man.

"The person who will push Ark into despair is me. I don't approve of others doing it!"

"Don't worry. He knows about your goal. If you follow him than your goal will definitely come true."

Maseutyu said after he guess Alan's real intention.

".....What exactly is the purpose of the Red Man?"

Alan asked with an expression that indicated he couldn't understand. He was someone who knew the unknown secrets of New World! At first, Alan had thought he was an employee of Global Exos like Ark. However, he had some misgivings about that thought. There were some level 700 monsters wandering around Scale. Meanwhile, the monsters in Seutandal were only level 300. And the current average level of users in New World was 250-300. When considering that point, it would take a long time for Scale to rise. It was a design of the game system since users wouldn't be able to deal with monsters in Scale if it rose.

In New World, <Episode III> was triggered when Seutandal rose so Scale was supposed to be a part of <Episode V~VI>. Even so, the Red Man was using a shortcut by rushing the resurrection of the world tree. What reason would an employee of Global Exos have to do such a

thing? In addition, the NPCs would not just blindly follow anyone. However, Maseutyu's answer was always evasive whenever Alan asked.

"You just have to follow him. If you are loyal to him then you will receive limitless glory that you can't even imagine."

'It really doesn't matter who he is.'

Alan nodded. Anyway, from the moment Alan changed into a Ruin Knight he forgot all thoughts about being an ordinary user. No, he didn't want to go back even if he could. Alan had already seen a small part of the Red Man's knowledge and abilities. According to Maseutyu, he would rise to the top spot of New World if he followed the Red Man. In addition, Alan's goal wasn't to play the game mediocrally. It was only to get revenge on Ark! The moment the task was completed, Alan could rise to the top and wait patiently to kill Ark.

'The Red Man has that type of strength and power!'

"Ah, is the prepared work going well?"

Maseutyu seemed to suddenly remember something and asked.

"Yes, a friend of mine is getting things ready on middle earth."

"I don't want to meddle but that power will definitely be useful. A flimsy power is better than nothing."

"I know."

The work Alan was preparing was a guild called 'Avenger' that Andel was organizing. Currently, Andel had already organized over 500 top class users that were over level 300. Although Andel wasn't over level 200, he was able to recruit that many users because of 'money.' Despite being a game, money still exerted an incredible power. Although Andel was pitiful and weak, he knew better than anyone how to use money. Alan became filled with self-confidence and Maseutyu nodded with a satisfied look.

“If you speak like that then I’ll believe you. But it will be a problem if you run out of funds. The items dropped from the Beast Dragon should help that.”

“Thank you.”

“Now we should depart. There are still plenty of mountains we have to go over in order to resurrect the world trees. Will you be slower than that person who was by himself?”

“I understand.”

Alan and Maseutyu ordered their troops and moved to the next place. However, it wasn’t the guardian that he would be meeting that was on Alan’s mind.

‘Just wait Ark! Your days are numbered! Scale will soon rise and the preparations to hold a festival for those who ignored me will begin. A festival of blood.....!’

--

Pang, pang, pang, pang!

The gorgeous fireworks exploded in the night sky. It was the height of summer and the beach town Bosaga was full of excitement about the start of the festival. Bosaga was a city adjacent to the Bristania harbour and there were no special monsters in the vicinity. Thanks to the wide sandy beach and stretches of ocean, there were tourists gathered from all over the place during summer. So Bosaga always held a festival for tourists during this season. When the festival was at its peak, Bosaga was a melting pot of excitement. Various flags of every country fluttered at appropriate distances. The acrobats and musicians marched down the street and showed their skills. Various rides and commotions were heard from the central plaza. It was some rides, street performances and colourful parades that were rarely seen in reality! Thanks to that, there was no place people could step in Bosaga without running into tourists.

Chweeeeak!

The festival was at its full peak in Bosaga. The fireworks flashed across the sky like meteors. Then a flash struck the soaring tower in the sky which belonged to the Magic Institute. The flash sparked and was drawn into the tower. The sparks were collected by a transmitter unit inside the tower and formed particles of light. The particles of light moved inside a glass tube and magic was sprinkled. Then like sand falling inside an hourglass, the particles of light gradually formed a person. The user wearing unusual leather armour was Ark.

“Welcome to the Bosaga Festival!”

As soon as Ark’s body was full restored, a group of people holding bouquets flocked around him. They were residents waiting to welcome tourists who used the Letter Movement. However, Ark just pushed past the people with a dreadful expression and ran into a corner.

“G-get out of the way! Ugh, eek!”

He leaned against the wall and vomited as it felt like his internal organs were being twisted.

‘Damn, I should’ve known considering it is the temporary Letter Movement.....’

In order to get to Bosaga, Ark had to quickly move from the Ciel Magic Institute Branch to Bosaga’s. Since the Letter Movement system was mainly built on the west harbour, Bosaga village hadn’t had one. However, the Lord of Bosaga had asked for permission to temporarily install the Letter Movement for the duration of the festival. It wasn’t surprising that he felt like vomiting!

“It is ten times more awful than when I used the Letter Movement of Jackson! Urgh!”

It was just a temporary install. Therefore it 100% ignored the user’s comfort and safety! Thanks to that, Ark had to go back and forth between hell for over 5 minutes.

-You have begun to feel dizzy.

<The symptoms of dizziness and vomiting will continue for 30 minutes.
Rest is recommended>

What a ridiculous situation.

'I'm never using the Letter Movement system again!'

Yet he willingly submitted to the risk because he had a reason to get to Bosaga quickly. Thanks to his method of using Letter Movement, he was able to arrive in Bosaga after only 5 minutes. After only vomiting gastric fluid, Ark shouted.

"Radun, give me Buksil's eyeball!"

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

After Radun spat out the eyeball, Ark shouted at it.

"Buksil, can you hear me? Buksil, answer me!"

"Ya, eh? A-Ark-nim!"

After being shaken sharply a few times, the eyeball suddenly focused. The eyeball looked at Ark with a stupid expression and then started clamouring.

"Ark-nim is here..... Atch! R-right now.....ah!"

"I already know the situation! There's no time to speak so just answer me! Where are you now?"

"I'm not sure. I'm too preoccupied....."

"Idiot, look around at the area. Isn't there something that should be recognizable from a far place?"

Ark interrupted Buksil's words and shouted. Yes, Ark had used the Letter Movement to quickly get to Bosaga because he knew the situation

involving Buksil. Ark knew about the situation in Bosaga thanks to a phone call 10 minutes ago. The person who called in the morning was Lee Myung-ryong.

“It’s me Hyun-woo. The situation is urgent! I can’t speak for long because I had to sneak away from the unit to call you while playing New World!”

Lee Myung-ryong.....Isyuram quickly explained the situation. While explaining the infiltration investigation, Isyuram heard that Ark was in a south-western coastal city. Ark was supposed to make contact with Buksil soon and Buksil was supposed to move there.

‘I have to lead the thieves to another place.’

While thinking this, he remembered the flyer from the harbour and mentioned it to the thieves.

“I heard some rumours about the festival so I watch a video and accidentally saw someone looking like a pig among the tourists!”

“What? Really?”

“There’s no doubt. It is impossible not to recognize the pig like fellow.”

So 30 of the thieves headed towards Bosaga at Isyuram’s words. Isyuram used various reasons to move the bandit group away from southwest region. Then.....Buksil unexpectedly showed up in Bosaga.

“Ohhh, it really is him! As expected from the friend of my heart!”

Garam cheered and praised him but Isyuram wasn’t happy. From then on, dozens of thieves started chasing Buksil. This was the reason why Ark submitted to motion sickness through Letter Movement.

‘Even though Teacher-nim has infiltrated them, he has no choice but to appear to be helpful. Fortunately Baekgu is there so Buksil won’t be

caught easily, but they can't possibly escape from dozens of thieves. After I help Buksil escape, I'll have to protect the memory crystal.'

Just as Ark was thinking this, the eyeball's scream was heard once again.

"Huk huk huk, there is a big ferris wheel near me! Hik!"

"Ferris wheel? I see it. I'll move to that area soon so just hold on!"

"U-understood. Ack, Baekgu!"

The eyeball screamed non-stop so it was possible to imagine the situation. Ark ran away from the Magic Institute immediately. And.....he stopped and sucked in a deep breath.

"Huk, what it this?"

A sea of black could be seen in front of the Magic Institute. It was morning in reality but in New World it was night time. However, it didn't simply look black. The only thing visible was the huge crowd present at the festival. He had heard about the Bosaga festival when leaving Ciel but it really transcended imagination. There were various rides in the central plaza, small street performances all over the place and tourists swarmed the taverns.

"Dammit, how will I find him in a place like this? Ah, is that the ferris wheel?"

He discovered the ride in the central plaza.

"This is no time to be stuck here, Dark Dance!"

Ark used Dark Dance to broke through the crowd like a ghost until he reached the central plaza. Bosaga was more like a city than a village. Fortunately, the central plaza wasn't far from the Magic Institute and he reached the ferris wheel after 10 minutes of using Dark Dance. But the problem was after he arrived. There were even more crowds gathered around the ferris wheel. He had to find a him. But.....finding one person was like looking for a needle in a desert.

"Summon Demon, Dedric!"

"You called, Master?" Eh? A festival!"

Racard exclaimed with joy as he saw the dazzling sights.

"I didn't call you here to play! Use satellite mode to look for Buksil!"

"Sheesh, so it's like that..... I understand."

Racard grunted and turned into a bat before trying to fly away. Racard was suddenly discovered by children and they swarmed around him and tugged at Racard.

"Aw, a bat!"

"It is a bat!"

"Hahaha, how marvellous. Bat, come over here!"

"Get away you rude things! I'm not a bat but a great vampire..... Ouch! Tickle, it tickles! Ugh, ouch! These damn kids..... Ouch!"

"Hahaha, this is great! If I press its stomach then it talks."

"Fun, how fun! Let's play with it!"

The children grabbed his wings and just laughed as Racard wriggled. Ark was impatient and was about to approach the children.

"Ah, Ark-nim!"

Then he heard Buksil's voice again. It was a vivid voice coming from near him, not the eyeball. Ark hurriedly stopped and turned towards the voice. But no matter how he looked, he couldn't find Buksil. Then he saw a big dog running and jumping among the rides. And a round object that resembled a balloon jumped up and waved its hand.

"Over here, here!"

'What the? That guy.....?'

Ark stared at the round object with an astounded expression. The rounded balloon shaped person was Buksil. He was wearing polka dot clothes with a variety of ribbons hanging off him. In addition, he was wearing speckled makeup under his hat. It was the same costume that clowns wore. Buksil and Baekgu were wearing a couple clown look.

‘He seems to have gotten a bit heavier.’

While Ark have been suffering in Ciel, Buksil and Baekgu had been enjoying the festival. In order to protect Buksil, Ark had rushed and paid the expensive letter movement fee so he felt anger well up at the sight.

‘Damn, if it wasn’t for the memory crystal.....’

At that time, he saw mobs of thieves behind Buksil and Baekgu.

“Ah, Ark-nim, hik!”

‘The thieves! To hold a sword so openly in a village.....’

Usually taking out swords in a village would be punished by the guards. Even if there weren’t guards present, the eyes of users and NPCs would be concentrated on them. But there were people dressed up and running round holding toy knives in the festival. So there wasn’t anybody who thought that the thieves were strange for holding swords. The thieves were even holding masks. If nobody died from a battle then the guards wouldn’t move.

‘Dammit, this is bad.’

Ark broke through the crowd and ran towards Buksil.

“M-Master, what are you doing? Ouch, these damn guys..... Ouch!”

Racard who was caught by the children screamed from behind him and Ark didn’t have time to worry about that. By overusing Dark Dance, he was able to penetrate the crowd and got near Buksil. Meanwhile, Buksil

and Baekgu ran between people while sweating. They were chased by the bandit group.

“Okay, I can reach them before the thieves catch up. Summon Demon, Razak!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

“Take the defense position and prepare for the enemy’s attack!”

Ark spread a safety net and made a defense camp with Razak. Now the top priority was to help Buksil escape. Even if he joined Buksil, it would be difficult to escape when surrounded by dozens of thieves. Especially with the enormous crowds gathered in the vicinity. Until Ark, the thieves wouldn’t care about other users and NPCs and would attack without care. Fighting a battle in a place like this would be absolutely disadvantageous. That was the reason why Ark created a safety net where only three people could pass. Ark would block the entrance after Buksil and Baekgu arrived. Although there were 30 thieves, only 2~3 people could enter through the entrance. If he used the terrain then he might be able to be time for Buksil to escape to a safe place. Even if the guards would move when the battle fully began, it would be difficult with the thieves chasing directly. Ark planned a strategy and raised his voice.

“Buksil, over here! You have to come over here!”

“Yes. U-understood. Baekgu!”

At Buksil’s order, Baekgu leaped over some obstacles and run towards Ark.

‘That’s it! There’s enough time to get that back from Buksil.....’

Ark took out his sword and watched as Buksil and Baekgu arrived.

“Ark-nim, I’m saved..... Huh? Huh huh huh huh? Waaaaaahhhhhhh!”

“Huk, Master!”

Buksil who had been running with tears in his eyes when he suddenly dangled from something. Had the thieves caught up to him? Buksil shrank with fear and struggled. Baekgu realised too late and hit the emergency brakes before running back to Baekgu. Then Buksil was dragged sideways as the thing he was stuck to moved at an extraordinary speed.

“What, what the?”

Ark and the chasing thieves just stared simultaneously with a dumb expression. They were looking at a small wagon moving along the rails spread all around Bosaga at a tremendous rate. What on earth was this? Ark looked around with confusion until he saw a big sign.

【High Speed Barrel Train!】

An ambitious ride prepared by the Bosaga festival committ

Able to travel at 300 kilometres per hour thanks to the magical engine, it is Bosaga’s state of the art magic carriage racing! With 100% safety equipment, it is possible to enjoy the exhilarating sense of speed!

<Fee to ride: 1 gold>

* Because the vehicle is moving at 300 kilometres per hour, it is dangerous to go on the rail.

It was the information on the sign next to the safety net. Buksil’s clothes had been caught on the carriage and he disappeared as it moved. In addition, the place Buksil was caught was the rear of the magic carriages.

Therefore Baekgu and Buksil had become a part of the ride and moved along the rails at 300 kilometres per hour.

“Aaaaaaaah, ssssave meeeeeee!”

“Masterrrrrrrr!”

“Dammit, we had almost caught up!”

“We can’t miss him, get out of the way!”

The thieves who had just missed Buksil and pushed users out of the way before taking a magic carriage. When a coin was inserted into the slot, they started to chase after Buksil at an extravagant speed.

“Dammit! Razak, transform!”

It wasn’t possible for Ark to just stay there. After Razak transformed into a blade, he pushed people out of the way and took the available magic carriage. The people waiting in line cursed but he had no time to pay attention to public morals. After inserting 1 gold, the carriage rumbled and departed.

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng!

Fireworks were still displayed in the night sky.

Act 5: The Carnival (1)

Kwaaaaaaah-!

300 km per hour!

The carriage moved on the rail so quickly that the surrounding landscape was distorted. 【High Speed Barrel Train】 was a ride where the rail structure 8 metres high spread all through Bosaga village. By angling against the guard rail, the carriage was about to be freely controlled like a racing game. It was also safe for carriages to collide because the bumpers had special magic absorption coating. It was quite an interesting ride so many people enjoyed it. However, there was no time to be enjoying the ride.

Buaaaang, kiiiiik! Buaaaang, kiiiiik!

Ark exerted 120% of the skill seen in TV games and continuously drifted around the corners. Then he saw the carriages containing the thieves in front of him entered a cave.

‘There must be some way to overtake Buksil and reduce the number of thieves!’

Ark handled the carriage with one hand and brandished his sword as he approached the enemy. The Saw blade stretched out like a whip and reeled around one of the robbers.

“Eh, what, what the? Aaaaack!”

The thief struggled to untie the Saw blade from around the neck. But it was going at 300 meters per hour. The carriage was made with the latest techniques and with the speed it was going at, even one pebble could overturn it. The thief lost control of the steering wheel and the magic carriage ended up smashed against a wall. While the carriage guaranteed 100% safety, the airbag that appeared still did damage to warriors. However, the thief flew into the sky when the carriage was smashed.

‘Okay. I’ve made one guy retire..... I’ll take care of them one by one!’

Ark laughed and gripped the handle tightly.

“Oh, t-that guy.....?”

“He was the one who interfered that time. He’s trying to interfere again!”

“Number 5, number 6, block that fellow!”

The thieves had discovered Ark so two of them regulated their speed and approached him. They surrounded Ark on both sides and fired random magic. It was a 300 km per hour death race. Isyuram was also mixed in with the group of thieves chasing Buksil. He had no choice but to act like he was with the thieves. While rounding the corner, he caught sight of Ark being surrounded by two carts and bit his lips with a worried expression. Of course, he knew that Ark could handle the

thieves. But it was different fighting while riding a magic carriage going 300 km per hour. In that situation, driving skills was more important than actual combat power.

“This is bad, that Ark guy, he has no driving license.....”

With Ark occupied, it was only a matter of time until the bandit group caught up with Buksil. If Buksil was caught then the memory crystal would be gone.

Kiiiiik, kwa kwang, kiiiiik, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

But Isyuram’s worry was needless. Ark used extravagant handling and pedal techniques to drift and avoid the overflowing magic. He used exquisite skill to rotate the carriage and counterattacked with the Saw blade. Isyuram was worried because Ark had been too busy to get his driver’s license. On the other hand, the thieves all had driving licenses and usually drove a lot. When thinking about it, it was natural for Ark to be pushed back. But there was something Isyuram didn’t know. Although Ark had never tried to drive, he had played racing games like Grand Turismo and Ridge Racer. Driving at this speed transcending common sense and just used the acrobatic design of the game. He didn’t understand driving in reality, but Ark was like a fish in water while driving at 300 km per hour in the game. Ark’s cart slid all over the rails and avoided the flying magic. However, it wasn’t easy to counterattack with the Saw blade while going at 300 km per hour.

“Sheesh, that rat bastard! Hey, block the front!”

When the magic didn’t work, the magician grinded his teeth together and shouted. Then a magic carriage accelerated suddenly and stopped in front of Ark. While the car in front slowed down, the one behind accelerated with the intention of trapping Ark in the middle.

“Now! Surround that fellow and break him!”

Buaaang!

The magic engine heated as the surrounding magic carriages narrowed their distance. At that moment, Ark stepped on the brake and instantly jumped up from the driver's seat.

"Huh? What, what the? Waaahhh!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Ark's magic carriage stopped and suddenly collided with those of the magicians. Ark then twisted his Saw blade and it closed around the bumper of the magic carriage in front.

"Radun, shield!"

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Just before Ark's foot touched the ground! Radun spat out a shield. Ark set his good on the handle of the shield while in mid-air and landed on the ground. The Saw blade then wrapped around a magic carriage that was still going at 300 km per hour. After it wound around the bump, he used the shield to do something similar to water skiing. Sparks flew from the surface of the shield as it began to slide along the rails.

"Oh, t-that guy.....!"

After seeing Ark hanging from his bumper, a thief twisted the steering wheel. The thief's ulterior motive was to make Ark crash into the guard rail. When the magic carriage veered sharply, Ark flew towards the guard rail thanks to the inertia. The moment it looked like Ark was going to hit the guard rail at 300 km per hour, he once again switched to the sword.

"Razak, transform back into a sword!"

The whip returned to a blade and Ark was drawn forward like an elastic band.

"Take this!"

Ark flew towards the back of the thief sitting in the driver's seat. The thief screamed and fell down. His shield had slammed into the back of the head and caused 'Stun.' When the driver lost consciousness, the magic carriage rotated around. Ark quickly unlocked the thief's seat belt and kicked him out.

"Y-you bastarrrrrrrrrd-!"

The thief yelled with distress as he fell from the magic carriage and rolled along the rail. After Ark took over the driver's seat, he once again started pursuing the bandit group again. Ark took care of three thieves and instantly caught up, making the bandit group murmur.

“What a monster like fellow!”

"Is he making a movie by himself?"

“Who on earth is he?”

“What an annoyance. Number 7, 8, 9, stop him!”

Then the thief at the head of the group chasing Buksil burst out.

“Ah, o-over there!”

The thief pointed to the rail ahead of him. When the cave ended was a 90 degree corner. The magic carriage in front was rotating rapidly and Buksil's clothes who had been caught was torn to pieces. At the same time, Buksil and Baekgu were thrown towards the guard rail thanks to inertia and centrifugal force.

“Kweeeeeeeek-!”

The pig screamed as he fell over the rail. The rails which connected outside the cave were 30 metres off the ground. At this rate, the falling Buksil and Baekgu would be squashed and turned into a broken set of pork and dog meat. However, Buksil had a very strange luck.

Puong, puong!

There was a lake located in Bosaga village that was underneath the rails where he fell. Thanks to that, Buksil and Baekgu were able to avoid becoming flattened meat. After being submerged, Buksil and Baekgu finally resurfaced after a while. However, they couldn't afford to sigh with relief.

"That pig, he fell into the lake!"

"We can't lose him! Everybody just jump straight down to the lake."

The determined thieves rushed straight at the guardrail, breaking it and falling down to the lake. As dozens of magic carriages fell into the lake, the users riding the duck boat cried out with distress. Buksil and Baekgu also screamed.

"Hik, why do they want to kill me so much?"

"Master, hold on tight!"

Buksil held on to Baekgu who started dog paddling and ran away.

"Damn, those bastards..... Get out of the way!"

The thieves threw away the magic carriage and seized a nearby duck boat. Thanks to that, the peaceful lake where the duck boats floated suddenly became chaos.

"Get out of the way, get out of the way! Kill everybody who gets in the way!"

Kirik, kirik, quack quack quack! Kirik, kirik, quack quack quack!

The bandit group stepped on the pedal and the duck boat quacked and rushed forward. So dozens of duck boats were chasing after a pig riding on a dog. However, the situation would be very serious if Buksil was caught so Ark couldn't find it very comedic.

'Damn, there really are various methods.'

He really didn't want to do it. But once again, Ark didn't have a choice. Ark stepped on the accelerator pedal and rushed through the guard rail that the thieves broke. The magic carriage fell over 30 metres into the lake. Ark quickly released his seat belt and climbed into the water. After looking around, he saw dozens of empty duck boats floating freely. Buksil riding Baekgu had escaped from the lake so the bandit group had also exited.

"Buksil, where are you now?"

"I'm not sure. I just passed by a place with a stone gargoyle..... Hiik!"

'A place with a stone gargoyle?'

Ark quickly scanned around the lake. Then he saw a huge statue slowly moving that was gathering a brilliant light. It seemed like a moving parade where dozens of wagons were holding festival icons. However, there was a large crowd as it was one of the most popular festival activities and he couldn't see Buksil at all.

"Dammit, trying to find him..... Racard, what are you doing?"

Ark suddenly shouted through the remote communication and Racard petulantly replied.

"Damn, why are you yelling at me? Do you know how much I suffered after Master didn't save me? Anyway, I've been looking for Buksil after leaving the children. Where is Master?"

"At the lake in the centre of the village. No, can you see a huge statue?"

"Statue? The strange one being carried by carts?"

'Yes. Buksil is around there so you move there and search for him.'

Ark ran away from the lake while giving the order to Racard. He used Dark Dance to navigate around the crowds and headed towards the parade.

“Oh, good!”

The huge figure lowered his wine cup with a happy expression. Then a Elf female looked at the barbecue with sour eyes and said.

“Hey, this is a festival right? Why does it look like you are enjoying it more?”

“Who wouldn’t like the festival? The alcohol is good. Hey, one more drink over here!”

The huge man shook his wine cup and shouted. The elf female pouted and said bluntly.

“Aren’t you drinking too much?”

“What? I’ve only drank five cups.”

“Isn’t that five servings of alcohol? Does your stomach contain a ghost that drinks alcohol?”

“Well how much barbecue did you eat? You already ate one pig.”

“You fool, don’t you know the difficulties of a woman who seeks beauty? This isn’t food, it is medicine, medicine. I had to diet because of the stress that piled up every day. If I can’t eat as much as I want in New World then I’ll go on a rampage. This is like a stress relieving pill.”

“But isn’t that pig too big? I don’t want to be involved with a woman who can eat one whole pig. You know that I’m a vegetarian.”

“W-who said that we were involved?”

The female elf’s face turned red and she kicked the man’s thick belly.

“Ouch, what the? Aren’t we involved?”

“You must hate living. Talking such nonsense, do you have a suicide note written?”

“Kikiki, you must be shy..... Ouch, got it, I understand. Huh? T-that.....?”

The playful man shouted winced and jumped up.

“What is it? What the?”

The female elf followed his gaze with surprise. But the man just shook his head without looking away. He had seen a dog with silver fur running among the crowd. The man was spellbound by the sight of the dog and muttered.

“To be able to see such a wonderful dog in a place like this! The gloss of that silver fur flying in the wind and the sleek muscles of the dignified body. Who is its owner? I don’t know but it clearly as an excellent pedigree! Is the owner the pig riding it? Ohhh, I’m envious. That is my dream dog. Furthermore, it is a dog that can carry people on its back! Damn, how can I get a dog like that?”

“Hah, you’re being foolish again. Dream dog? Do you wake up dreaming of a dog? At any rate, it’ll just be a problem for you. What good is such a messy animal? You stupid dog otaku! And why do you want another dog? You’re already raising ten at home.”

The female elf scowled and shot the man a glare. Then the man looked offended.

“What was that? Don’t you also have a cat at your house?”

“Yes, I’m raising one. One cat. This is a normal standard. Raising one or two is normal for a dog otaku. But you’re raising ten. Is that normal?”

“Hah, you really don’t understand. It is a dog. It is a pet which deserves love. For a cat to be compared to it is ridiculous. Have you seen the famous art masterpiece ‘the Homeless Angel? It is a pitiful looking child hugging a big white dog..... Oohhhh, Nero.....no, was it the Flanders’ dog?”

The huge man was moved to tears and exclaimed loudly.

“Apart from the ‘Homeless Angel,’ dogs also appear in various movies and cartoons. Isn’t that proof that it is an existence that is loved worldwide? On the other hand, cats are mainly seen next to gloomy witches. I don’t understand how you can raise such a gloomy animal in your house.”

“W-witch? Are you saying I’m a witch?”

“.....I didn’t exactly say that. You’re a magician. Isn’t a female magician a witch?”

“Is that an otaku language that only you know? Stop talking like that!”

“Ah, I’m going crazy. The dog is fine, the dog! Eh, what the? That pair!”

The man suddenly frowned and cursed. The female elf who was about to throw an angry punch flinched and studied the man’s face.

“What, what the? R-really.....you’re angry?”

“Eh? Ah, I’m sorry. That’s not it.....eh? T-those guys!”

The man’s embarrassed expression once again became angry. The female elf realized the reason why the man was so angry too late. The man wasn’t looking at the silver dog just then. Instead, some fellows wearing masks were surrounding the dog and hitting it. The dog was standing in front of its pig owner and protecting him despite its many wounds.

“Those bastards dare to beat up a cool dog like him.....!”

The man ground his teeth together and pulled out his bayonet. The female elf spoke with an annoyed look.

“Wait a minute. We don’t know what the situation is.”

“Why do I need to know? That dog is loyal to its owner. He must be a good person. Anyone who can raise a dog like that is not a bad person. And the ones attacking the dog are the bad guys! I’ve decided!”

Wasn't that an assertion tied closely to bias? But the man had no doubts that they were villains and ran towards them with his bayonet out.

"Ah, those guys, it's already over for them."

The female elf looked at the villains with compassionate eyes. She knew that the man had a severe dog mania. He had never seen anyone who loved dogs so much. No matter how angry he was, he would smile and stroke a dog if he saw it. These days he was also raising dogs so she was sincerely worried. Didn't he also go to an animal hospital to play with the dogs? Anyway, those dog otaku tendencies were also applied to the game. No, those tendencies were even further expanded because of the game. No matter how rare the item in front of him, he would leave it to chase after rabbits and squirrels.

"That a fool like that is one of the top 5 warriors in Bristania....."

The female elf sighed and mumbled. While the man was indeed skilled, he had a particularly severe love for animals. It's because of his love for animals that he switched to the druid profession 'Beast Master.' Beast Master! Yes, the man and female elf arguing about the cat and dog was Bread and Redian.

"Although is a pretty good guy, he becomes quite strange when it comes to dogs."

Redian complained with pouted lips. She initially knew Bread from New World's beta test, where they were the last two remaining from the battle royale. She encountered Bread right before the beta test ended and he was the only opponent she couldn't win or lose against. After the game was commercialized, they frequently kept in touch and hunted together by chance until they became quite close. In fact, Bread was a pioneer who earned quite a lot of respect from other users. Even though he normally looked quite foolish, he completely changed when battling. As the leader of a party, he showed a surprising ability to take charge and he always took the most dangerous roles. He would also run to help colleagues without any concern about the danger. So word spread among the pioneers that 'Bread is the one to capture a dungeon with.' It

was natural for Redian who was constantly around him to get a good impression of Bread. She also realized that Bread didn't hate her. Therefore they rapidly became close.....It was around that time. Bread's weakness was that he was a dog otaku.... Of course, she could understand the feelings of someone who liked dogs. She also didn't hate dogs. But Bread's love of dogs has long surpassed common sense and was at an almost psychotic level.

"I really have little luck. The only decent man I found is strangely obsessed with dogs....."

That was why she didn't like dogs. If Bread's head wasn't so strange about dogs then their relationship would've certainly developed more by now. It was because of that rebellious heart that she suddenly mentioned cats to Bread. While Bread seriously loved animals, the only one he showed an adverse reaction to was cats. Anyway, beating a dog in front of Bread..... she didn't have to see the results to anticipate it.

"I don't understand. How annoying. I'll just continue eating the barbecue."

After a short hesitation, Redian sat back down at the barbecue. Empty plates were already piled up on the table.

"Ah, Baekgu!"

"Ack, M-master!"

Baekgu stumbled as he was cut by the sword again. But Baekgu showed his commitment to his master by stabilizing his balance and showing his fangs.

"Grrrrrr, I'll protect Master!"

"Damn, this annoying stray dog.....!"

The bandit group surrounding Buksil stared at Baekgu with irritation. After exiting the lake a step ahead of Ark, the thieves managed to catch up with Buksil. But they ran into unexpectedly strong resistance from Baekgu and were unable to capture Buksil yet.

“But he is now in a critical condition. Let’s deal with him before that fellow comes!”

The thieves raised their swords and ran up to Baekgu. The thieves had an average level between 250-300. On the other hand, Baekgu was level 310. In addition, Baekgu was a member of the Wolrang clan. He was able to endure even when surrounded by 10 thieves. But even if there was a 60 level difference, there were still 10 of them. Even though a number of them had split up to search, there were still 7 thieves surrounding Baekgu. With that many people, it was only a matter of minutes before Baekgu entered a critical condition. When pushed by the thieves, it wasn’t possible to endure.

“Sob sob sob, Baekgu. Somebody help!”

Baekgu looked at the bloody Baekgu and whined pitifully. However, a frenzied parade was occurring outside the alley. Buksil’s voice was buried under all the noise. Also people weren’t very interested in looking in alleys. Even if someone saw it, the situation wouldn’t change. Magical Princess Minky Momo, Ultraman, Taekwon V, etc. Lots of stores in Bosaga sold those types of masks so who could imagine the situation if they came across the thieves masquerading as heroes. If others saw the sword then they would think it was just for show.

“Just hold on a minute. I’m almost there!”

Ark’s voice was heard in Buksil’s ear. But Ark wasn’t in the area. His voice was coming through the eyeball.

“No. Baekgu is already in critical condition!”

Buksil yelled tearfully. Meanwhile, Baekgu had been forced into a corner by the thieves and shouted.

“Master, don’t worry about me and just escape. Keuaaaaang!”

“Ah, no. Baekgu! Even if I die, I can’t just leave you and run away! Ack!”

Buksil screamed and ran towards Baekgu as the sword descended.

Hwiiiing, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Then there was a sudden tremendous wind and the thieves attacking Baekgu fell down. Buksil and the thieves looked at the entrance of the alley simultaneously.

“Ah, Ark-nim? Eh? Who are you?”

“Huhuhuhu, just a dog lover passing by.”

The person who attacked the thieves wasn’t Ark. He was a huge man wearing leather armour with a bayonet leaning against his shoulder. Despite their confusion, Bread just calmly uttered those shameless words. Yes, the reason Bread did those things was because of Baekgu. Baekgu was a member of the Wolrang clan with a wonderful outer appearance.

‘Huck! This was the person leading the pirate fleet.....!’

Buksil flinched after he saw Bread and retreated one step. When the ferry was raided by pirates a while ago, Buksil had seen Ark fighting against Bread. Fortunately, Bread failed to recognize Buksil. At that time, Buksil and Baekgu had been hanging on from the mast. They didn’t even dare to breathe in case Bread or Redian would attack them. Anyway, Baekgu looked at Bread through bloody eyes. Bread raised the bayonet and showed his teeth before making a threatening posture.

“I deal with them so you two retreat.”

“Huh? H-how come?”

“The dog.”

“Huh?”

“I have no interest in people killing each other. But I can’t allow them to attack a dog!”

Bread answered while staring at the thieves. Then the words Bread said to the thieves popped into Buksil’s mind.

‘What the? Isn’t he just a fool?’

But that thought disappeared after a few minutes. The group of thieves rushed towards Bread with their swords withdrawn.

“I don’t know who you are but I won’t allow you to interfere!”

“You won’t allow me to interfere? You really are bad guys. Then I don’t have to explain. This skill might be a bit excessive for guys like you but I’ll show you the greatness of the dog. Beast Spirit Possession, power of the dog rise!”

Keuaaaaang!

The shape of a huge dog appearing around Bread and he roared, causing a small earthquake. After being possessed by the soul of a dog, a huge blast of wind appeared whenever he swung his bayonet. It was an alarming momentum! The thieves flinched and took a defensive posture. But when Bread’s weapon collided with them, the thieves’ defensive posture collapsed and the thieves flew to the ground. Thanks to the dog beast spirit possession, his attack increased by 50%! As a dog enthusiast, it was the skill Bread had the most confidence in. Bread was also a level 400 character who invested most of his stats into strength. It was a reckless strength which cut the mast of a ship in half and freaked Ark out, so the level 250~300 thieves had no chance of defeating him.

“Hik, this monster like fellow!”

“Hahaha, this is the power of the dog that you ignored!”

Bread burst out and started to step on the thieves.

“Hyaaaaa, protect animals! Love dogs!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

.....The seven thieves lying on the ground cried and babbled as the level 400 Bread continued beating them. Of course, it might've been a little bit different if there was a combination of professions such as warrior, archer and healer. However, they were so flustered from chasing after Buksil that there was no time to consider professions when separating. The thieves who found Buksil were 5 thieves, 1 magician and 1 archer. The roughly made party were disorderly and had no proper chance against Bread.

“Huhuhu, how is it? Can you feel the love of animals in your heart?”

Bread raised his bayonet to his shoulder and laughed.

“Huk huk huk, I've arrived!”

Someone jumped between the parade wagons and shouted. Bread who was kicking the body of the thieves flinched and looked with surprise.

“Eh? Y-you!”

“Eek? You're that moron? Why are you here?”

Ark shouted as he looked at Bread with confusion. After exiting the lake and hearing Buksil's relentless SOS calls, Ark had come running! But when he arrived, the thieves were crumpled up in a corner. And Bread was unexpectedly standing in front of Buksil and Baekgu protecting them? Ark moved his eyes and looked at Buksil.

‘Why is this idiot here?’

‘How should I know? Just pretend you don't know me.’

Buksil instantly answered with his eyes. Their current position in the narrow alley was Ark, Bread then Buksil and Baekgu all lined up. In addition, Buksil and Baekgu had been so beaten up by the pursuing thieves that they barely had any health left. If Bread learned that Buksil

was with Ark and hit them then the game was over. How should this situation be sorted? While Ark was busy thinking, Bread burst out laughing.

"This is good. You really did come to this place."

"Ah, I'm actually a little busy? Can you wait and look for me again?"

"Uh, really? Well it can't be helped."

Bread scratched his head and turned his body before swinging his bayonet. Of course, he had no intention of falling for Ark's tricks. Ark avoided the bayonet at the last minute and Bread shook his head.

".....Did you think I would fall for that? Only someone stupid would allow you to escape this time."

"Damn, can't you just pretend you didn't see me? I'm really busy!"

"Ha, if you're busy then just defeat me quickly. Of course, I won't collapse so easily. I'll conclude it this time! Beast Spirit Possession, power of the bear rise!"

Bread once again acted like a space sheriff and brandished his bayonet. Ark retreated and escaped being damaged by the bayonet before biting his lips.

'Damn, I have to get away from this uncouth guy with Buksil before the next group of thieves come. Am I cursed or something?'

It was enough to make him want to run and curse. In fact, Bread was a level 400 user with a cheat like skill. But who was Ark? Wasn't he a strong warrior who managed to knock down many users in PVP? Of course, he couldn't be 100% certain when considering Bread's capabilities. However, the situation was so tangled that it didn't matter if he won or lost. But what kind of curse was this? He didn't know why but the situation was always tangled after he met Bread.

On the ferry he had to shake the pot to make the immortality pill so he couldn't fight properly. And this time his mission was to help Buksil escape. Fortunately, he didn't understand why but Bread had taken care of the thieves attacking Buksil. But according to Isyuram's information, the bandit group had 30 people so there were still 23 thieves left. If he left Buksil unattended while fighting Bread and he was found by the thieves then it would be a problem.

'I have no choice. I have to look for a chance to escape from this guy!'

Ark glanced at Buksil and Baekgu and thought fiercely. It was impossible not to look at Buksil and Baekgu with uneasy eyes. He had no idea where the other thieves were. Even when looking through the eyeball, there were too many people so it wasn't easy to find the thieves. So he wasn't able to make a daring move.

"Jerk, where are you looking?"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Bread aimed at a gap and brought down his bayonet. Ark had been looking away and couldn't possibly avoid it so he blocked with his sword. The absurd pressure pushed Ark back and his body rolled across the ground. He had barely got his balance back when the bayonet fell again. Ark rolled his body to avoid the bayonet again and bounced up like a spring before jumping on a platform. After maintaining a proper posture, Ark breathed roughly as he looked at Bread.

'Huk huk huk, as expected he isn't an easy opponent!'

"Hahaha, you definitely have skills. I absolutely won't miss this time. It will be concluded!"

Bread said as he followed him onto the platform. It was at that time. Why could cheering suddenly been heard from around him? Ark's face distorted as he looked at the strange situation around him. Ark had jumped to avoid the attack without confirming the place, and he belatedly realized that he had jumped onto one of the parade carts. In addition, the one he jumped on was a theatre carriage performing a

play. When Ark and Bread had suddenly jumped onto the stage, the NPCs and spectators thought it was part of the production and applauding.

‘I have to get back. Well, in this case.....’

Ark was mortified as he looked around the festival. But there were some people making different expressions. Behind the stage curtain, two actors holding swords stared with stunned expressions. After a while, an old man appeared between the two actors and hit the back of Ark’s head with a frown.

“Who the hell are you? Do you know how long I’ve prepared for this stage? If you wanted to be the actors then you should’ve auditioned. Ah, it can’t be helped. I can’t let guys like you ruin my play. Fortunately the next scene is a fight.....you two on the stage, do something!”

Then Bread looked at Ark and laughed.

“Isn’t this good? Since this is a stage, don’t you have no choice but to see this through to the end? This is the request of that old man so shouldn’t we put on a show? Beast Spirit Possession, power of the cheetah rise!”

Bread chose the soul of a cheetah and ran up to Ark. The cheetah maximized agility and speed so the bayonet fell like lightning! Thanks to the power of the bear, each blow shook the stage and it seemed like it might even collapse. There was no room for mistakes as one hit would be a deadly attack! Ark carefully stepped back. However, the audience cheered and applauded every time.

“Oh, isn’t this directing awesome?”

“Doesn’t it really seem like they’re fighting?”

“It’s true. The production is so radical that the stage is cracking. I can’t even imagine it!”

When the audience exclaimed with admiration, the director interjected.

“Ohhh, good, very good! Isn’t this nicer than I thought? Okay, let’s go with it. But why are they so aggressive? It’s so exciting they might not survive. Hey, the small fellow! Don’t just escape like a squirrel and attack as well!”

‘Damn, I need to do something!’

Ark ground his teeth together and frowned. In fact, there were other reasons aside from Buksil as to why he couldn’t fight properly. While Buksil had been playing tag with the thieves, Ark had continuously used Dark Dance in order to get through the crowds. Although it didn’t consume as much mana as other skills, it still used 300 mana with each use. Even if he had 6000 mana, who wouldn’t run out after using it so much? Even Flash and Dark Blade which didn’t use a lot of mana wasn’t available in this situation. Still, it was imperative to rescue Buksil from the thieves so he blindly used Dark Dance and thought he could deal with being without mana. He wasn’t supposed to meet a monster like this.

‘Dammit, I shouldn’t have summoned my pets.....’

Ark had thought about using the Ghost Knight Corps skill. When considering the level of the skill, they wouldn’t be able to deal any damage to Bread but 30 ghost knights could distract him for 5 seconds. Distracting Bread for 5 seconds would be sufficient for Ark to escape. However, he had summoned his familiars twice so he only had 200 spiritual power left. The Ghost Knight Corps skill required 300 spiritual power.

‘Well, I can do normal attacks.....’

But once again, Bread was a level 400 user who could use the spirit of the turtle to raise his defense. His normal attacks would do limited damage. Even if Ark managed to attack that uncouth guy ten times, being hit just once would reverse the situation instantly.

‘Why is it that I can never fight properly whenever I meet this guy?’

Although he could avoid the bayonet thanks to his hell training against the zombies, he couldn't defeat Bread. Ark had no choice but to escape like a loach.

"Huk, t-those guys! Ark-nim, the thieves! Hik, they found me. The bandit group is pursuing me!"

The eyeball attached to his back burst out screaming. Ark panicked and looked around at the scream. He could see Buksil and Baekgu running away. And there were pursued by 20 thieves with only a few metres difference.

"Catch him!"

The sound of the thieves shouting was audible from the stage.

'Dammit! Now is not the time to be doing this.....'

"I told you not to look away from me!"

Then Bread shot forward like an arrow and swung his bayonet. Ark was looking at Buksil and couldn't avoid getting hit in the side. Blood spurted and he instantly lost 1000 health. At the same time, he received an abnormal state and his movements were slowed.

'A mistake!'

A warning bell rang in Ark's head. Once a user's level was above a certain point, their equipment really wasn't a joke. There were various skills to increase stats and one strike would often cause an abnormal state. It wasn't necessary to explain to people familiar with online games, attack was no good if it couldn't penetrate the armour. Therefore PVP battles at low levels often took over 10 minutes, fights between high level users were settled as fast as lightning. In a fight against a high level PVP user, concentration was needed to avoid even one mistake. However, Ark couldn't concentrate on the battle. Once he permitted a critical hit, he became even more impatient.

‘Dammit, as expected I can’t defeat this guy without mana. In this state it is impossible to win. I also can’t leave Buksil alone. But I have no chance without any skills available. What is an alternative method?’

Then something popped into Ark’s head.

He didn’t have enough mana and spiritual power. He couldn’t be in a worst situation! However, didn’t Ark have a skill that doesn’t require mana or spiritual power? It was the skill he learnt just a while ago in Ciel, Entrusted Volumes! The so-called lottery skill. Yes, didn’t the skill use health instead of mana and spiritual power? Of course, there was no guarantee about what effect would come out.

‘It couldn’t possible get worse. I have no choice but to rely on luck. If it lands on the Byong hammer or the Goblin punch then it can stop that guy’s movement for a short time and allow me to escape.’

“Okay, let’s try it once. Entrusted Volumes!”

Ark raised his fist to Bread and shouted. With a flash, the slot machines that he had seen outside of Ciel appeared. The icons slowly changed until with a tak, tak, tak, it stopped. Then a huge fanfare like sound effect was heard and the information window appeared.

-You have used the power of Entrusted Volumes.

* Results

【Properties】 : <Smile> 【Alignment】 : <Magician> 【Environment】 : <Theatre Stage>

The attack method selected is ‘Comic Magician.’

<The ‘Comic Magician’ effect is applied to all attacks for 3 minutes>

‘Comic Magician effect for 3 minutes? What is that?’

Entrusted Volumes had once again had an unexpected special effect. What type of effect will it have? He couldn't grasp what Comic Magician would do and hesitated to attack.

"Ohu, I don't know what it does but that is a skill. Are you planning to fight properly now?"

Although he initially flinched at the thought of Ark's counterattack, Bread just stepped back and laughed. And he fixed his attitude and raised the bayonet again. The bayonet came at him right after Ark used Entrusted Volumes. Since it was an attack right after using a skill, there was no time to avoid it! He blocked using his sword like before, but this time Ark lowered his centre to decrease the power. After a short moment, Ark determined that he could attack and kneeled before lifting his sword at an angle.

Pyorong!

Yet why did a bouquet of flowers abruptly came from Ark's sword? Both Ark's and Bread's eyes widened at the ridiculous situation. The spectators, actors and directors also stared at Ark with a foolish expression. After an absurdly long second passed, the audience burst out laughing.

"Hahaha, this is a hit! I never thought a bouquet would appear in this situation!"

"Is he proposing to the enemy?"

"A proposal of marriage in the face of death! This is really funny!"

"Hey, please take it. He's really pitiful."

The audience whistled and cheered with stupid expressions. After looking at the audience's reaction, the director raised his thumb and shouted.

"Ohhhhh! Good, very good! Now it's a comedic angle? I like it! You can get a job as an actor immediately!"

However, Ark and Bread just seemed confused about their reaction. Then Bread's face turned red and he ground his teeth together.

"This, this bastard.....until when.....are you trying to mock me?"

"Ah, no this isn't....."

"Shut up!"

Bread frowned and ran up to him. Ark hurriedly swung his sword. This time a pigeon and rabbit appeared when he swung it. Yes, this was the effect of Comic Magician. The Comic Magician effect was literally a funny magician.

'Oh my god, what kind of comic effect is this?'

In a desperate situation, he lost 500 health and trusted Entrusted Volumes for this effect? Despite his resentment for it, he had put his trust in Entrusted Volumes. However, he couldn't possibly imagine the ridiculous Comic Magician effect.

"This bastard, mocking me again..... Ah, what a cute rabbit..... No. I need to kill that bastard..... Huck, a puppy! Aigoo! These guys are dangerous! Ugh, don't cling! I'm so happy. No, this can't be. This bastard, this devilish bastard, how did he know my weakness? Using such innocent animals in order to win.....what a coward!"

Once again, Bread was an animal lover. When the rabbit and puppy appeared like ghosts from Ark's sword, Bread's face instantly became absent-minded. Bread couldn't attack since it might injure the animals and he couldn't move either. But Ark couldn't understand the circumstances and just remained confused.

'Eh? What's with that guy? Is there an unusual effect like 'Hallucinations' to Comic Magician?'

Just as Ark was thinking this. Among the audience, a female elf wearing white armour shouted angrily.

“You really are a stupid bastard. Fireball!”

She was Redian. She was with Bread when he went off to deal with the thieves. She realized she couldn't stop Bread from beating the thieves up so she just continued eating her barbecue. Then she heard noisy laughter from the theatre carriage and witnessed the play(?) between Bread and Ark.

‘Dammit, I’m screwed! That female was also nearby!’

Ark saw her absurd flying magic a little too late. Then Bread appeared in front of Ark and blocked the fire magic with his bayonet. Redian shouted as soon as Bread struck the magic.

“What are you doing? Are you still thinking about a macho duel?”

“Why are you throwing around magic like that? It’ll hurt the animals!”

“You dare say such things in this situation?”

“It’s because this is the situation that I’m saying that!”

‘What the, what is this?’

Ark looked with bemused eyes as Bread and Redian started arguing. Ark couldn't understand anything that happened after he used Comic Magician but they were too busy arguing that Ark wasn't their priority.

‘I don’t know what’s going on but this is an opportunity!’

While the two were arguing like alley cats, Ark sneaked away to the back of the stage. Redian belatedly noticed Ark’s behaviour and shouted.

“You idiot, that bastard is escaping!”

“Eh? This bastard is thinking about escaping again?”

Bread raised his bayonet and rushed after Ark.

‘I have no choice but to believe in Comic Magician. I’ll leave it to the rabbit hallucination or something!’

Ark swung his sword and a message window appeared at the same time.

-The lasting effect of Entrusted Volumes is over!

<It is always important for a magician’s stage to be finished properly. The magician’s finishing move is normally his best magic! When the effect of Comic Magician ends, ‘Magician Finish’ will automatically be triggered>

‘Magician Finish? Eh?’

Pepepepeng!

Ark made a perplexed expression. Huge amounts of pollen suddenly emerged from the sword and exploded into smoke. Ark flinched and when he closed his eyes and opened it again, he was behind the stage. Yes, Magician Finish was an effect where the magician disappeared behind a smoke screen. It was an absurd technique but it benefited Ark at the moment.

‘Ohu, isn’t this a perfect hit?’

Ark managed to escape from Bread and he didn’t look back. At that time, Bread rotated his bayonet like a windmill and got rid of the smokescreen.

“What, what the? Where is that bastard?”

Bread realized that Ark had disappeared from the stage and looked around restlessly. Then Redian ran forward and exclaimed.

“This idiot, look away from the stage!”

“Eh? How did he get there? Did he use Warp or something?”

Bread jumped off the stage and ran after Ark who he could see escaping in the distance. But when he jumped off the stage, someone suddenly grabbed Bread's shoulder.

"Sir, please don't forget about the bill!"

"Eh?"

"You drank 3,000cc of beer and that woman ate 18 servings of barbecue so the total cost is 36 gold. That woman you were with told me that you were paying for the bill. It will be a problem if you try to eat and run away."

The man was the owner of the tavern that Bread and Redian had eaten at. Bread looked around with an angry expression while Redian looked away and pretended ignorance. When the drama ended under such unexpected circumstances, the audience burst out laughing.

"Hahaha, this is the real deal! The last scene is paying off the accounts?"

"I don't know why the contents changed but it is the best!"

"This is the best play the festival has staged!"

"Ohhh, this is the first time my plays have received so many cheers!"

The director wiped away impressed tears..... Anyway, Bread and Redian were caught by the tavern owner while Ark ran after Buksil.

'Entrusted Volumes can be used in this style. That's right, I still don't know that much. It is still too early to give up on Entrusted Volumes. Of course, most are useless when the effect has gotten the wrong skills depending on the situation, although it might help. There is still more worthy research.'

Ark was starting to consider Entrusted Volumes again thanks to the unexpected situation. But it was more important to ensure Buksil escape than worry about unravelling the secrets of Entrusted Volumes right now. While Ark was caught by Bread, Buksil had already been running

away for a few minutes. But no matter how much he looked around the area, he couldn't see Buksil or the thieves.

"Buksil, where on earth are you? Surely you haven't already been caught?"

"I don't know. While being chased by the thieves, I ended up hiding somewhere..... Hik, t-there's something strange. M-monsters..... Hiik!"

The eyeball winced and stuttered.

"Monsters? Why would monsters be in a village?"

"Master!"

Ark tilted his head with confusion. In the meantime, Racard had been flying around and shouted.

"I saw something while flying this way. Buksil went in there just now!"

"There?"

Ark looked at the building that Racard was pointing to. It was a building which gave an eerie impression with a huge sign in front of it.

【Horror Castle】

Welcome to the castle of terror! Escape the midsummer's heat and experience the castle of terror! If you escape from the maze within the time limit then you will get a fixed item!

<Admission fee: 50 silver>

Act 6: The Carnival (2)

"It is a haunted house this time?"

Ark's veins popped out on his forehead as he glared at the eyeballs. The place that Buksil entered was a common site in amusement parks, the haunted house. It was a shabby building where adults could find enjoyment like a child for several minutes. Frankly, Ark couldn't understand why people would pay money to enter a place like that.

'Well, it does seem to be different from the haunted houses in reality.....'

Anyway, Ark stood in front of the haunted castle and realized that it was at a different level. Unlike the normal haunted houses that were in shabby buildings, it was a horror castle. It was a real house that had been remodelled. In addition, magic was a part of the daily life in New World. Just like the 300 km magic carriage, the experience of the horror castle would no doubt be beyond his expectations. That was exactly the problem.

'Now's not the time to be playing around!'

Was this that pig's idea of escaping? First the 300 km per hour magic carriage, the duck boat floating on the lake, the theatre carriage and now a haunted house maze? Why did he keep running away to these sorts of places? Wasn't that pig just playing around? Or maybe he just wanted Ark to suffer?He contemplated that thought.

"Turns out there aren't that many places to hide here. Wait, what is this switch? Do not touch? Aha, this might be something to open the door. Eek, ugh!"

The eyeball suddenly burst out screaming. Ark asked with an urgent voice.

"What's going on? What happened?"

"S-something rolled over..... Uh, what's this? It's soft and squishy? Hik! It's a thief!"

"Thief? Were you found by the thieves?"

"Hik, hik, the thing that fell was the head of a thief!"

"You stupid asshole! Are you playing around? Why would you touch a switch that says do not touch?"

"But, but....."

"Dammit, just run away! I'll enter immediately so just escape for the moment! Keep up the communication and tell me if there's any unique terrain. Do you understand?"

"Okay! Hik! Baekgu, let's go!"

'Just hearing the situation through words is crazy.'

He complained as he looked at the eyeball shrieking. Ark could guess the current situation through the eyeball. But he didn't know exactly where Buksil was or what kind of situation he was in so it was quite frustrating.

"Anyway, the situation is urgent. I have to hurry....."

Ark started walking forward before he winced and stopped. A man and woman were in front of the Horror Castle staring at Ark. While Ark had been thinking, Bread and Redian had caught up with him.

"Huhuhu. I didn't understand at first but now I know better than to underestimate you and let you get away. I made sure to memorize your scent."

Bread had used Beast Spirit Possession of the dog and used its sense of smell.

"Now, shall we play like a short time ago?"

"I won't miss this time."

Redian also muttered as she shot Ark a poisonous look.

'That's right. Damn, what are these guys?'

Ark really felt like his breath was being blocked. The opponent was the level 400 Beast Master Bread! Even if he was properly prepared for the battle, he couldn't be assured against that opponent. Ark had also failed to recover the health that he lost in the previous battle. He had also only recovered 300 mana. In this state, there was a 100 in 100 chance he would lose.

'There is no way to get away from them.'

Ark's eyes moved towards Redian standing to one side. Both her hands currently contained magic ready to explode. Ark had fought against many magicians and knew what kind of skill it was. It was the assistive magic 'Quick Spell.' In order to do magic, a chant was needed to be memorized and recited before the magic would work. Usually magicians could only use one hand but Redian had magic on standby with both hands.

'The Quick Spell will make her attacks faster. But.....'

He didn't know why but Bread was eager to fight against Ark in a 1-on-1 battle. If Bread's purpose was just to step on Ark then he would've called the nearby Redian to help. And Redian always complained about Bread's attitude.

'If Redian is preparing the 'Quick Spell' then there is a high possibility it is a movement restriction magic.'

Redian planned to tie Ark's foot while Bread settled it. A magician who had the ability to move a pirate ship alone was now preparing a movement restriction spell with Quick Spell. It was also in both hands so she intended to tie his two feet. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that he wouldn't be able to avoid the magic.

'Even without the magic, it is impossible to run away.'

Unfortunately, both of them were blocking the horror castle. There was no meaning in escaping and leaving Buksil alone. Of course, the result was the same even if he defeated Bread and Redian. It was a dilemma! While Ark was thinking, Bread approached with his bayonet.

"I'll settle it this time."

"Okay, good. You want to settle it. But can't you just wait a bit? I really do have something incredibly important to do. It is a request. Can't you wait a few more days before settling this fight between us?"

Ark tried to appeal to the pair. Until now, he had never asked for anything from other people in New World. Ark was proud of that in his own way. But now wasn't the time for his pride. Wouldn't it be a problem if Isyuram couldn't catch the wanted criminals? However, after the ferry Bread wasn't stupid enough to fall for it again.

"This bastard, do you think I look funny? Do you think I'd be fooled twice?"

.....Once again, this was why his normal behaviour was important.

"No, this time it really is urgent. If you would just listen to the circumstances....."

"No questions!"

Bread gripped his bayonet with both hands and approached Ark. Suddenly there was a noisy sound and dozens of people came running.

"Over there, it's that person!"

"What, what the?"

Bread hesitated as the guards came running and stepped back. Even Bread wouldn't dare swing his bayonet in front of dozens of guards. The incoming guards surrounded Ark.

"He fits the description. Yes, we need you to come with us."

"W-what's going on?"

Ark was at a loss from the situation and asked the guard.

“A report from the Festive Committee has come in just now. There has been several lawless behaviour in some of our facilities that interfered with sales. Your description was among the information.”

While chasing after Buksil and the thieves, Ark’s description had been reported to the guards by the duck boat operator. With the festival being disrupted so much, it was natural for the garrison to be dispatched.

“But I wasn’t the one who broke the guard rail and seized the duck boats. I.....”

“Yes, we’ll listen to the matter at the guard headquarters. Arrest him.”

Things had really gotten worse.

Aside from Bread and Redian, now he was even being hassled by the village guards? Of course, it was possible to get away from Bread and Redian if he was taken by the guards. Although Ark had caused various scenes of confusion, he hadn’t done any substantial property damage like the thieves. If the guards listened to the situation then it was likely he would be released with a light penalty or warning. But what if Buksil was caught by the thieves in the meantime.

‘I’m really going crazy.....’

Then a question suddenly popped into Ark’s head.

‘Wait? Why are the guards only talking to me?’

Ark stared at Bread and Redian. Bread also appeared in the parade with Ark but the audience and director was satisfied so there shouldn’t be any complaints. Certainly, Bread hadn’t done anything at the festival for the guards to be interested in him. But the issue wasn’t the festival.

‘Bread and Redian were chaotic when I met them a few days ago!’

Yes, Bread and Redian were chaotic when they were leading the pirate fleet. In addition, it wasn’t a standard level of chaotic. In New World, chaotic users who committed a lot of crime would have their ID turn increasingly redder. When Ark had met the two of them for the first

time, their ID was so red it was almost black. Ark didn't know it yet but the reason Redian and Bread have such high chaotic levels was because they broke into Haman fort and killed NPCs at the tourist information centre. Killing NPCs stacked a few more chaotic value than killing users.

'In addition, Bread was beating up that group of thieves just then. The thieves just then aren't chaotic. But now their IDs.....?'

It wasn't necessary to confirm it with Eyes of the Cat. If the guards standing right next to them didn't take an interest then that meant they had a normal status. How could they wander the village after they committed murder just a short while ago? Ark only knew of two different methods. One method was to use Shambala's Death's Agent. But that was a profession specific skill of the Saint Assassin. What would a regular player use?

'That's right, there is that!'

A smile formed on Ark's mouth.

"It's them. I unintentionally caused a commotion by chasing after them!"

"What?"

"They're brutal criminals who killed a lot of people!"

Ark pointed to Bread and Redian as the guards turned their heads.

"But they weren't in the reports....."

"It is a lie, please watch carefully!"

Ark quickly pulled out two scrolls and shouted.

"[Sword of Truth] activate! Target Redian and Bread!"

"Heok, t-that bastard.....!"

Bread and Redian freaked out and screamed as they saw the situation. When the necessary conditions were met, there was a 100% chance of

the scroll hitting the target! When the scroll was triggered, two enormous swords appeared in the sky and hit the back of their head. When [Sword of Truth] was activated, Ark expected it to hit the target. Yes, the reason the chaotic Bread and Redian was able to walk around the village was thanks to the [Lie] scroll. [Sword of Truth] would only be triggered if the target users were under the effect of the [Lie] scroll! It was a scroll to release the effect of [Lie].

‘Huhuhu, it worked as expected.’

Ark smirked as Bread and Redian was hit by the [Sword of Truth]. In fact, Ark hadn’t gathered the scrolls intentionally. He hadn’t felt the need for it. But since he collected money from the repeatable quests in Ciel, he sometimes bought the scrolls in order to help Ronnie. [Sword of Truth] was one of those scrolls. Anyway, their IDs instantly turned red when hit by the [Sword of Truth]. Then the guards suddenly remembered something and shouted with surprise.

“Ah! That is.....?”

“I remember. They’re the leaders of the pirate party who made the ferry sink last time!”

“Now the pirates are trying to attack the festival, catch them!”

The guards shouted with indignation and rushed forward.

“God dammit, Quick Spell activate, Vortex trap!”

Redian activated the movement restriction magic with the Quick Spell she had prepared. An enormous gust of wind emerged from Redian and hit the guards running up to them. It was the Vortex Trap which caused stiffness for 2 seconds and decreased movement speed by 50% for 30 seconds! But there were a huge number of guards deployed to protect the Bosaga festival. When the magic hit six guards, the remaining ones became even more resentful.

“Huk, t-those guys.....!”

"They are resisting. Send a signal and gather the guards!"

One guard blew a whistle and other guards flocked from all directions. Bread glared at Ark as the situation deteriorated.

"That bastard.....!"

"Idiot, now's not the time for that! Let's go!"

After Redian raised her voice angrily, they both ran away. No matter how strong Bread and Redian were, they couldn't take care of all the guards. Redian once again used the prepared Quick Spell to activate Vortex Trap and hurriedly ran away. Ark smirked and laughed as he watched their retreating backs.

"Kukukuku, this is why you have to live a good life."

"Hah? Master is saying that?"

"Shut up! I never committed brutal acts like that."

Ark glared at Racard and declared sharply. Anyway, he managed to escape from Bread and Redian thanks to the guards. If the two of them with red IDs were caught then they would be eating beans with rice for a month.

"Would Bread and Redian be caught that easily?"

However, they couldn't annoy Ark in Bosaga village anymore.

"Now those two are dealt with. I need to look for Buksil quickly!"

Ark ran towards the horror castle with Racard.

"Huhuhuhu, a stupid human has visited. Would you like to step foot into this castle of fear? If you have the courage than 50 silver....."

When he arrived in front of the horror castle, the NPC stretched out his hand. Ark threw the coin with an annoyed expression and ran into the horror castle.

Ohhhhhh, kya kya kya kya, kuoooooh!

When he entered the horror castle, a fearsome noise was instantly audible. It was crying, moaning and intimidating roar of ghosts and monsters! The acoustics truly created a scary atmosphere. But the problem wasn't the noises.

"Damn, what is this?"

When he communicated through the eyeball earlier, he didn't know where Buksil was. It was normal to make the haunted house slightly complicated. Didn't the words on the signpost also talk about a maze? But when he came in, he didn't realize it would be this complicated. Dozens of paths in the maze spread out like a cobweb from the entrance. No matter how complicated the dungeon terrain was, it normally wasn't a problem. Thanks to the cartography skill which mapped out the terrain features of a dungeon, he never wandered a route twice. But this was a ride not a dungeon. The cartography skill wasn't available. In addition, there weren't any distinct geographic features to be marked.

"How can I find Buksil in here?"

"Waaahhh! Ark-nim, what are you doing? Please come soon. There are a lot of them in the area!"

The eyeball explained some rough features but it wasn't any help. He didn't know how to find the place. The horror castle also had so many footprints that he couldn't use Radun's Stalking. In the end, he had no choice but to go around and look for the place Buksil mentioned. Ark worried for a while before he said.

"It can't be helped. It is better to split up and look for him than to stay together."

"But Master, that guy is a skeleton."

Racard muttered as he tapped Razak. Just like Razak said, this was a village. A skeleton wandering alone could cause problems. But Ark just shook his head.

“This place is a haunted house. People who are disguised as monsters are intentionally scattered around so there won’t be an uproar if a skeleton is seen. But Razak has no way of making contact if Buksil is found so he’ll move with you. It isn’t necessary to say again but don’t let them catch Buksil. Once you’ve found him, do whatever it takes to protect him.”

“Okay. Hey, skeleton! Follow me.”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Ark and his summons split up and started looking for Buksil.

“Over there!”

“I saw him run over there!”

It was an underground area with old coffins and tools everywhere. There was dozens of people running around and crying out in loud voices. Buksil had run around the maze avoiding the thieves for 10 minutes, and the 20 thieves had narrowly missed him because of the complicated maze. Just like Ark, the bandit group split up and started looking for Buksil. However, it wasn’t easy to find one person in a maze. Furthermore, there were traps laid out everywhere on the castle floor. The traps weren’t ones that would threaten lives but some of them stopped people from moving or were slides which moved them to lower floors, so it wasn’t easy to catch Buksil. However, Buksil was also worried about falling into the traps. He had been caught a few times by the traps. He had also been pursued by NPCs disguised as monsters while wandering around lost. Therefore the thieves had caught up with Buksil and the siege was narrowing.

"He is definitely near here. You guys over here and you guys look over there!"

Buksil jumped every time he heard the voice of the thieves.

"Hik, there are thieves everywhere! I'm surrounded!"

"Master, there is a hole in that corner!"

At that moment Baekgu pointed at a corner and shouted. When he turned his head, there was a small hole between some gruesome torture tools. There were also some secret passages prepared in the horror castle for fun.....it was also the only escape method for Buksil to survive. Buksil ran towards the hole without looking. Just as he was about to squeeze his abundant body in, a zombie suddenly fell out of the hole.

"Aaaagh!"

Buksil screamed and flopped down onto the ground. But the zombie just grinned and walked to the other side.

"Hihihi, it is another success. Now, who shall I tease next?"

Buksil trembled while Baekgu just sighed and muttered.

"Ah Master, it was just a fake monster."

"I know, I know. But....."

Tears fell down Buksil's face as he spoke. Of course Buksil knew that all the monsters were just NPCs dressed up and his safety was guaranteed. In addition, he had encountered all sorts of monsters while travelling with Ark. There was no reason to shrink in fear when he saw a monster. But knowing that and not being afraid was different. Didn't people watch horror movies for the sensation of fear? In that unexpected situation, anyone would be surprised. Thus Buksil shed tears with every encounter in the game.

"Eh, this way!"

Then a few thieves shouted from the opposite corner.

“Hik, B-Baekgu!”

“Master, please hurry!”

Baekgu bit Buksil and dragged him through the hole.

“Damn, that bastard!”

The thieves cursed and tried to follow. Suddenly 10 black hands appeared and grabbed the thieves’ clothes. This was also one of the events of the horror castle. Thanks to these events, the thieves had ended up missing Buksil a few times. When the thieves shook off the hands and entered the hole, Buksil couldn’t be seen anymore.

“Dammit, we missed him again!”

“If only there wasn’t that NPC just now..... This place is really irritating!”

“But we’ve almost completed surrounded the area. We’ll catch that guy soon.”

“Yes, now it’s only a matter of time. And we’ve gone down this passage earlier. We’ll continue down this way while some of the guys will block the other side. No matter where he appears, we’ll catch him shortly.”

A thief kicked a coffin with an irritated expression as they ran down the passage. After a while, the coffin which the thief kicked opened and Buksil and Baekgu emerged.

“Huk huk huk, I’m alive!”

Sweat dripped down Buksil’s face as he murmured. Baekgu had learned too late that the hole was actually a trap. As soon as they passed through the hole, the trap had been triggered and shut the two of them in a big coffin. But it was because Buksil was trapped in the can that he was able to elude the thieves. Buksil sighed with relief before he suddenly made an angry expression.

“But what on earth did I do to those people?”

Buksil still didn't know why the thieves were pursuing him so desperately. In fact, Buksil should be the angry one since he was attacked first in Seutandal. However, Buksil had a wide generosity and forgiven them. So why did these villains have a grudge against him?

“In the outside world, there are even more unscrupulous humans than Ark-nim.”

Buksil was tired by the persistence of the thieves and shook his head. Then Baekgu suddenly jerked with wariness and his eyes stared into the darkness. A man that was approaching from the other side flinched and stopped. After looking around for a moment, he approached Buksil and Baekgu. When Baekgu growled, he instantly stopped moving again.

“Wait, I'm not an enemy.”

“.....?”

“Over there, is your name Buksil?”

The man surveyed the area like the main character of an intelligence movie and spoke in a low voice.

“I actually know Ark really well.”

“Ah, Ark-nim?”

“Yes, I can't explain it in detail but I'm on your side. I came here to save you. There are a lot of guys in this area so try to avoid the place. Those fellows have split up and are methodically narrowing the net. A few of them will soon come here. But I've grasped almost all of their movements so if you follow me then you can escape unharmed. I'll give you the details after we escape. Follow me.”

“Wah, thank you!”

Buksil lowered his guard and was about to approach the man talking about Ark. Then Baekgu tensed and growled.

"Grrrrrr, Master! Do not be fooled. It is a trap!"

"What, what the?"

"I don't smell Ark at all on this human. There are only the scents of the fellows chasing us. He is a part of their group. He can't handle us alone so he is trying to lure us to the group!"

"Heok, it was like that? This bad person!"

Buksil cursed and stepped back. Then the man made an embarrassed face and tried to explain.

"Oh, no, that's not it! Certainly I haven't met Ark here....."

"See, he hasn't met Ark!"

"Dammit, just listen to my story first! No, I don't have time to explain. I'll explain once we get out of here....."

"Don't make me laugh! Do you think I will be fooled by such a lie?"

Buksil snorted and raised his voice.He wasn't going to be fooled. Baekgu stepped in front of Buksil. Meanwhile, the man once again tried to approach Buksil as he shouted.

"There is no time! I'll explain everything once we get out!"

"Master, please retreat!"

The Baekgu jumped up and grabbed the man's neck. The man flinched and moved his upper body to avoid it, but his neck was still scratched and blood splattered.

"T-this.....!"

The man grabbed his neck and glared at Baekgu. The man.....is probably already known but he was Isyuram, also known as Lee Myung-ryong. Isyuram hadn't expected Baekgu and Buksil's reaction.

‘Why is this guy here?’

While Ark was wandering around the south west, Buksil had stayed in Bosaga causing the situation to be tangled after Isyuram lead the thieves there. Thus he desperately called Ark because he was afraid of Buksil being surrounded by the thieves.

‘I can’t let them catch Buksil!’

If that happened then the infiltration investigation wouldn’t be his concern. If he was with the thieves when they met Buksil then he couldn’t do anything. So Isyuram made an excuse and separated from the thieves. Then he mobilized his police knowledge and traced the bandit group’s tracks to find Buksil.

‘I’ve done it!’

Isyuram inwardly cheered as he saw Buksil. By identifying the thieves’ search route, he was able to determine an escape route for Buksil. Yet Isyuram hadn’t considered a flaw with his idea. It was good that he found Buksil but there was no way to prove that he knew Ark. He was undercover so there was no way to explain it. Even if he explained, what guarantee was there that Buksil would believe him? Of course, the situation would be different if Isyuram and Buksil communicated with Ark through the eyeball. Because he could give his real name and receive confirmation. However Isyuram didn’t know about the strange skill.

“There are already a lot of them in this area. This passage will be swarmed pretty soon. If those guys find us then everything would be ruined! I don’t have time to persuade Buksil. There is only one way left!”

Isyuram clenched his teeth and stared at Baekgu. The important one to Isyuram was Buksil. Even if Buksil died here, there were thieves waiting at the resurrection place. If the thieves swarming the resurrection place got the memory crystal and moved then there was no chance of Ark reclaiming it. In the end, Isyuram was forced to take an extreme action.

'Buksil is a merchant so he doesn't have combat capabilities. The problem is Baekgu. If I take care of the dog than Buksil will have no choice but to go with me. After I meet Ark at a safe place and remove the understanding then he will hand over the memory crystal.'

Isyuram avoided Baekgu's following attack and counterattacked with a shark kick. Then Buksil jumped with surprise and shouted.

"You've exposed your true colours you villain!"

Thanks to that, the misunderstanding deepened even further. But Isyuram didn't have that many choices.

'I have to handle that dog before the other guys come!'

Isyuram used some wonderful foot movements and started kicking Baekgu.....

Snap!

.....Baekgu ran up to him at a tremendous pace and kicked his thigh. While playing the game, Isyuram hadn't figured out that he was using an experimental unit with 100% pain sensitivity. When Baekgu injured his thigh and blood came pouring out, he really felt the acute pain. At the same time, an embarrassing message window rose.

-You have been injured by the NPC with a wolf attribute. 650 damage!

<The serious damage to your thigh will decrease movement speed and reaction rate by 30% for 10 minutes!>

"What, what the, this guy!"

Isyuram burst out with confusion as he stumbled. Isyuram didn't have a skill or scroll to confirm the level of his opponent. In addition, he had never seen Baekgu fight the other thieves. He thought that the dog would be at a similar level to him. However, it couldn't be compared to facing against the gnolls. Buksil made a gleeful expression and shouted.

“Bah! Baekgu is level 310! He can easily deal with one opponent!”

“L-level 310?”

Isyuram looked at Baekgu with shocked eyes. Isyuram had thought Buksil had no combat capabilities because he was a merchant but Isyuram was also a merchant. While playing against the gnolls, he had polished off his combat techniques. However, this was also a game. In reality, the person's knowledge and vision was needed for their combat capabilities. There were no such things like the strength or stamina stats. Moreover, Isyuram had the basic taekwondo but also some specially designed military martial arts to suppress violent organizations. But any criminals wouldn't fail to recognize the special martial arts of the police agency. Therefore Isyuram avoided using those moves in a fight just in case the thieves recognized it. So Isyuram and Garam were at a similar level 230 when they first met. But no matter his superhuman fighting ability in reality, Isyuram was a level 230 merchant fighting against the level 310 Baekgu from the Wolrang clan.

“W-wait a minute! Time, time!”

Isyuram belatedly grasped the situation and asked for time. But there was no way it would be accepted.

“Bah! So you can call you colleagues? Baekgu, take care of him!”

“Yes, Master! Keuaaaaang!”

Baekgu sensed that Isyuram was weaker than him and started all out attacking. Isyuram used 120% of his taekwondo skills to oppose him but it was ineffective. Levels had an absolute impact on the game. The difference between their attack, defense, strength, stamina and agility was like heaven and earth. In addition, Isyuram was a merchant while Baekgu was a beast warrior. Even if Isyuram hit the vital spots, he only dealt 50-80 damage to Baekgu at most. Meanwhile, one scratch from Baekgu took 300-400 of his health. The level difference was too big. Isyuram was bloody after just a few minutes.

‘Oh my god, one this hot summer day..... I'm being eaten by a dog.....’

But that wasn't all.

"Yes, yes! Bastard, you bastard!"

Buksil cursed and kicked Isyuram's prone body. The pig had experienced so much misery that he had shed tears.

"Master, I can hear the footsteps of other people!"

Buksil stopped kicking after hearing Baekgu's voice. He got on Baekgu's back and they quickly ran away.

"I heard some sounds over here. Eh? This.....?"

After Buksil and Baekgu had disappeared around the corner for a while, the thieves finally appeared. They belatedly found Isyuram's dead body.

"I-Isyuram!"

Garam held Isyuram's body and screamed.

"Ugh, how did this happen..... Wait, the wounds look like he had been bitten by a dog..... Ugh. It was the puppy with that pig..... Damn, I told him not to go alone..... That guy who got involved in our business. Who is he?"

Garam turned his body and shouted.

"Will those guys who don't trust Isyuram keep talking? Please speak. Can you still say that after seeing his body? How many times have I told you? This person will never betray us! This guy, this guy is.... He never complained even when you sent him doubtful looks. He ran after that guy for our sake and became so miserable....."

Garam could barely talk as he sobbed. Then the thieves nodded with solemn expressions.

"Uhh, he went this far for us."

After he became dog food, the thieves now thought that Isyuram was reliable. Anyway, flames of anger ignited in Garam's eyes as he held Isyuram's corpse.

"Ughhh. How dare that hybrid dog and pig kill my friend? I absolutely won't miss! This body is still warm so they couldn't have escaped far. Catch them and make them pay the price! Tear them to pieces!"

'..... Please endure it. Please miss for me.'

Isyuram sighed as he was forcibly shut down.

"Geez, what are you doing? Quickly!"

"Huh? No, I mean....."

Racard hesitated and scratched his head. Racard who had changed into a boy released his breath as he saw four zombies.

'Hah, what is this?'

After splitting up with Ark at the entrance of the castle, Racard started searching for Buksil with Razak. Then he found a similar room to what Buksil had described.

'Huhuhu, I quite like this place?'

Racard was in the lowest floor of the horror castle where there were various coffins and torture tools scattered around. But that wasn't the reason why Racard stopped moving. The zombies had suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Kuaaaaah! Eat everybody..... Eh?"

The zombies tilted their heads with confusion before one stepped in front. He stared at Racard and Razak before smiling.

“What the? Is this a company in the same line of business? Did you also receive an assignment in this area?”

‘Assignment?’

Racard thought for a while before he figured out the situation. Needless to say, but the zombies were disguised NPCs. They saw the skeletal Razak and misunderstood that he was another worker of the castle. Racard thought it was too troublesome to clarify so he nodded.

“Yes, so can we go now?”

Then the zombie said to Razak.

“But isn’t that really well made?”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak became angry at the zombie’s words and expressed his dissatisfaction. The zombies were at a loss by Razak’s response.

“Huk, what the? This is really a skeleton?”

Then Racard interjected quickly.

“Oh, he is real. He is my familiar that I summoned.”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack?

Racard whispered to Razak in a low voice.

“You fool, Master said not to cause an unnecessary disturbance.”

“Summon? Then you are a summoner?”

The zombies became their wariness as Racard nodded. The NPCs worked at the horror castle so they naturally had a fear of summoners. The residents wore monster makeup so they couldn’t tell the difference between real monsters.

“But isn’t this too extreme?”

"You look 10 years old yet you're summoning a skeleton?"

"Aha, you must be someone young assigned here."

"Your clothes look like you are disguising as a vampire but it is quite crude. Not only is such a little child assigned here but also his pet skeleton....."

'What the? Dressed as a vampire? Isn't it different? And crude?'

They thought a real vampire was disguised as a crude vampire? What were they saying? Racard glared angrily at their words.

"Aaaaack!"

He suddenly heard a scream from one side. The zombies exchanged glances and started laughing.

"Ohhh, a guest!"

"Huhuhu, that person has been screaming all night from our surprised appearances."

"I really am thankful for such reactions. Teasing sincere guests is the most enjoyable part."

"Now's not the time to be doing this. One person in each location!"

The zombies voluntarily scattered and hid themselves. Then a zombie opened the lid of a coffin that it was hiding in and shouted.

"Ya! What are you guys doing?"

"Huh? No, we....."

"You two go to that place. Can't you see that spacious coffin? It is a good place to hide and surprise guests. Huhuhu, if you take the guests off guard then they'll be surprised. Try it a few times and it is surprisingly fun. You will be fine."

The zombie insisted that Racard and Razak squeeze into the coffin.

“Hah, making a real vampire and undead do a part time job in a haunted house.....”

Razak sighed as he entered the coffin with Racard. Then Razak glanced at him with dissatisfied eyes and said.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

“What the? Why are you blaming me? Master was the one who told us not to cause any difficulties. And if you were in this situation alone then you would already be dragged to the guards.”

Clack clack clack, ttadadak!

“Who? There is no other way. We have no choice but to go along with the zombies. Let’s just watch the situation for a little bit.”

“Hey, rookie! Why aren’t you staying quiet? Do you want to be paid?”

The zombie in the opposite coffin declared sharply towards Racard and Razak.

“.....Yes, I’ll work hard. Ya! They said to be quiet!”

Racard shut his lips and pouted. How much time had passed? Then there was the sound of footsteps approaching before it ran around the corner. The strategy was starting! As expected from the veteran zombies, they had exquisite timing as they emerged from the coffins.

“Hahaha, we’re going to eat everybody!”

As expected, the guests stopped as they saw the zombies. It was at that time. An arrow abruptly flew and pierced the thigh of one guest. The guests kneeled to one side and screamed with distress.

Bark-!

‘A bark? What the, this sound? Wait? This familiar sound.....?’

Racard who was still waiting peeked through a hole in the coffin. At the same time, confusion spread on Racard's face. To his surprise, the one who collapsed from the arrow was Baekgu. When Baekgu fell down, the pig riding up fell off and rolled into a corner. It was Buksil. Then over ten thieves came running.

"We've finally caught that pig scum!"

"Huh? W-what is happening.....?"

The zombies were confused as some people appeared holding weapons. Then the thieves brandished their swords and shouted.

"It's time for you to die!"

"Huck! Murder! There are murders at the horror castle!"

"Garam, we can't leave these guys alone. It will be annoying if they report it to the guards. Kill them all!"

"Ah, that's right. Catch them!"

Garam and the bandit group attacked the zombies with swords and arrows. They were just regular NPCs so they instantly collapsed as the thieves fired skills at them. After taking care of the zombies, the thieves cornered Buksil and Baekgu in a corner.

"Huhuhuhu, there is no place for you to run!"

'M-Master, it is serious!'

Racard inwardly cried with distress as he watched the scene.

Act 7: The Carnival (3)

"Huhuhu, I will suck every last drop of your blood!"

There was the sound of a wall sliding back and a monster suddenly popped out. It was a production effect to catch people off guard! But the guest just looked at the monster absent-mindedly and sighed before walking past.

‘It really is crazy.’

The person scratching his head with annoyance was Ark. After entering the horror castle and separating from his summons, Ark went up to the 2nd floor by himself. He was in a place known as the ‘Room of Mirrors.’ It was a maze like everywhere else but the walls were made of mirrors. The mirrors on the wall reflected everything around it.

‘I should turn around, damn!’

While he had been thinking, his feet had just been wandering around. Besides.....

“Hahaha, I will suck your blood! Blood! Isn’t it scary?”

The monster who Ark ignored just then stood in front of him and shouted. The monster disguise of the NPC just made Ark’s blood pressure rise even more.

“I don’t want to talk to you so get out of my way, huh?”

“.....Ah, yes. I-I’m sorry.”

Ark used the full force of ‘Intimidation’ to scare off cowardly monster. Ark glared at the monster and continued walking.

“M-Master, it is serious!”

Racard’s voice abruptly shook his eardrums.

“What the? What’s going on?”

“I found Buksil and Baekgu. But they are already surrounded by a group of thieves!”

“W-what? Where? Where are you now?”

“I was dragged by some zombies so I don’t know the exact location. All I know is that it is downstairs.”

“What does it look like? Tell me more!”

“There are various torture tools as decorations scattered around.”

“Okay, wait a minute! No, stop it somehow!”

“B-but there are 10 people there.”

“Dammit, just stop them until I get close!”

Ark shouted urgently and ran through the Room of Mirrors. However, he only walked a few steps before he stopped. Once again, this was the Room of Mirrors. The mirrors reflected in every direction and it was easy to lose his sense of direction in the maze. Ark couldn’t just wander around directionless. But now that the situation was so urgent, how could he find the exit?

‘It is an emergency. I have no time to be lost in a place like this. I need to escape this maze.....’

Then Ark raised his head and looked back at the monster. Yes, that was the fastest way to escape the maze! The horror castle maze was designed to make its customers wander around. What reason would people who weren’t customers have to wander around? Ark turned around and grabbed the monster’s throat before shouting.

“Hey, you!”

“Kyak! What are you doing Sir?”

“I don’t have a lot of time to talk. Do you have a map of this place?”

“M-map? I have it but.....”

The monster stuttered as he was grabbed by the neck.

“Shut up! Don’t consider me a guest. A person’s life is at stake. Now give me the map!”

“But Sir, the rules.....”

“I said a human life is at stake! Do you also want to risk your life?”

When Ark used Advanced Intimidation, the monster instantly took out its map. Once again, the maze was designed to make the guests wander around so they could be scared. But that only applied to the guests. It wouldn’t do for NPCs disguised with monster makeup to wander around lost. In order to prevent this, the hidden NPCs had detailed maps to prevent this. Ark opened the map he had seized using Intimidation and checked it.

‘As expected!’

Sections marked blue were seen on the map. They were the passages designed for staff to move easily. If he used the passages designed for the staff then he could reach his destination without getting lost.

‘This must be the place Racard talked about.’

The ‘Underground Torture Chamber’ caught Ark’s eye and he headed to that area. Racard said there were various torture tools around so Buksil was probably somewhere in that area. Ark looked for the staff passage that had the shortest distance and ran to the underground torture chamber.

“The problem is where exactly Buksil is being held by those thieves.....”

Ark saw various props lying around as he wandered the complex passages. The ‘Underground Torture Chamber’ matched the atmosphere of the horror castle so it had the widest area assigned. Plus there were coffins and torture tools scattered everywhere. It was impossible to narrow down a specific location. So even when Ark arrived at the ‘Underground Torture Chamber,’ Ark couldn’t move for a while. Then he suddenly lost 500 mana and the information window appeared.

-Your summon Razak has drained your mana to use Steel Loyalty.

<His body has become like steel and defense has increased by 926>

‘Steel Loyalty!’

Ark’s eyes instantly flashed. Razak could only use Steel Loyalty when he was within 10 metres of Ark. In other words, Razak was somewhere in a 10 metre radius. And Ark had sent him with Racard so Buksil would be in that location as well!

“That’s it! Radun, Stalking! Track that flow of mana just now!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun bobbed his head and pointed to one side. Ark confirmed the direction and used his remaining mana on Sprint. After turning various corners, he heard the voices of the thieves.

“What, what the, this guy?” Where did this thing suddenly come from?”

“He is the familiar of that interfering guy. We have to take care of this before that guy comes!”

“Eh? Why can’t my sword hit properly?”

The thieves were perplexed after their sword bounced off Razak. The instant the thieves had herded Buksil into a corner and attacked, Ark had entered the vicinity. So Razak left the coffin and stood in front of Buksil before using Steel Loyalty. After Razak turned into steel, all the attacks from the thieves bounced back. When Razak changed to steel, his defense rose according to Razak’s loyalty which was 926. Thus Steel Loyalty added 926 defense. The thieves were only level 250-300 so it was impossible for them to damage Razak.

“Well done Razak!”

When Ark appeared, the thieves flinched and turned their heads.

"Huk, t-that guy is.....?"

"Racard, Blood Lane!"

"Ohhhh, the blood curse!"

Now was the opportunity to rescue Buksil! Ark sprinted forward and made Racard use Blood Lane. Then Racard emerged from the coffin and spouted blood from his mouth. It wasn't so strange when it was a bat, but the sight of a boy spouting blood was oddly weird. But despite being a boy or a bat, the effect of Blood Lane was amazing. It flowed up and covered a range of 10 metres like a rain shower. The descent of the cursed blood caused a large number of unusual states. Furthermore, this place the skill was used wasn't a wide swamp like before. The thieves were gathered in a small passage. The odds of Blood Lane causing an abnormal state were 50%. Among the ten people, six of them were caught by 'Despair' or 'Helplessness.' Among them, two were also caught by 'Confusion' and attacked their colleagues.

'I'm lucky that Blood Lane is a skill that doesn't consume mana. Anyway, there are 6 fellows with abnormal states. I need to deal with the remaining four.....'

Ark was very cool-headed and calmly judged the situation. Obviously, dealing with four thieves wasn't difficult for him. However, that was the usual him.....Ark had recovered some mana but he was still in a bad shape. There were 20 thieves who had entered the horror castle to chase Buksil. Even if he took care of these guys, there were still 10 remaining. Ark wouldn't be able to endure it if they joined.

'It is imperative that we escape from Bosaga!'

"Razak, skill off! Sword!"

Ark decided on a course of action and shouted to Razak. Razak then changed into the Saw blade. Ark swung the Saw Blade like a whip and dealt chain damage to the thieves before shouting.

"Now! Buksil, Baekgu, run!"

“Hehehe, I’m a King! Everybody kneel down!”

But Buksil just smirked and started rattling nonsense. The range of Blood Lane was 10 metres so Buksil was also caught by its effects. Fortunately, Baekgu was able to resist and wasn’t caught by the abnormal states.

“That stupid bastard! Baekgu, bite Buksil and run with him to the opposite side!”

“Yes, Ark-nim!”

Baekgu bit the back of Buksil’s collar and quickly escaped. The thieves who weren’t caught hurriedly lifted their bow. After Ark swung the Saw Blade and blocked their attacks, he ran after Buksil using Sprint. At that moment, Racard who had been lying on the ground as a side effect of Blood Lane groaned.

“Awooooo, blood.....blood..... Master.....you are abandoning me..... I.....help.....”

“Go to your house. Summon release!”

Racard disappeared as Ark commanded without even looking back.

“Stand up!”

The four thieves shouted as they wildly shot arrows. However, they had already made it quite a distance thanks to Ark’s fast judgement of the situation. Arrows flying from a distance place wasn’t a problem. Ark hit the arrow with his Saw Blade and ran to an exit.

“To the right, this time it is the left side!”

Ark checked the map as he ran and soon the exit appeared. When he saw the dim light of the fireworks outside, Ark sighed with relief. When Baekgu ran through the exit, he immediately slammed on the brakes and stopped.

“What are you doing?”

“Ah, Ark-nim, there.....!”

When Ark shouted angrily, Baekgu indicated in front of him and stuttered. Ark followed Baekgu’s finger and stiffened. He had barely found Buksil and came to an exit. When the 20 thieves entered the horror castle, they wanted to block the exit to the village. So they contacted the chasing thieves scattered about the village using ‘Feather of Whispering’ and made them gather at the exit.

‘Dammit.....I came all the way here.....!’

Ark’s face darkened. He had no mana left. Racard had also returned to his vampire castle. In such a situation he encountered 10 thieves. With the four thieves behind him, he couldn’t escape back into the horror castle. The situation couldn’t be worse than this.

‘But.....!’

The only lucky thing was that this was a village. Furthermore, Ark’s current exit wasn’t far from the central square. If the 10 people caused a scuffle here than the guards would gather. Once the guards gathered than the thieves couldn’t attack Ark anymore. In addition, the four thieves had killed NPCs in the horror castle so they were chaotic. He had to run away before the situation became larger. The problem was whether he could endure and protect Buksil at the same time.....

‘But there is no other way! I have to hang in there!’

Ark made a firm resolution and clenched his sword. Then one of the ridiculous thieves wearing a mask of Sailor Moon said.

“Heh, did you want the guards to come?”

“Even with all of you, it will be hard to catch for you to take care of me. Do you want to confirm it?”

“No, that’s not necessary. We’ve already confirmed your skills in the swamp. I even admired your skills which took care of Jepeteu hyung-nim. In other words.....”

The Sailor Moon's voice suddenly became cold.

"I honestly want to step on you. But you're not our purpose right now. We'll take care of you later once the pig is caught."

"Then try to kill me before the guards come."

"Ah Ark-nim, to go that far.....!"

Baekgu looked at Ark with impressed eyes at his resolution for death. The dog was still unaware of the situation. It was natural since his owner Buksil didn't know anything either. Anyway, Baekgu had some unexpected misunderstandings but Ark had no choice but to protect Buksil.

"Let's see? Is it really like that?"

At that time the Sailor Moon took out a strange scroll from his bag. It was a scroll with gold letters on it. He wasn't familiar with the scroll. However, he thought he had seen it somewhere. After staring at the eye-catching scroll for a while, Ark realized what it was too late.

'That's impossible.....no, there's no doubt! That is the [Banish] scroll Buksil previously used!'

Yes, it was the rare [Banish] scroll Buksil used in Seutandal on the Red Man. It was a scroll which sent the designated person to a place 10 km away! And the Sailor Moon was planning to use the [Banish] scroll on Ark! It wasn't necessary to say but the effect of the scroll was absolute. Didn't the [Banish] scroll exert tremendous havoc on the Red Man? There was no way for Ark to stop the effect of the scroll. If Ark was blown away 10 km then the situation would be over. Without Ark there to sabotage it, the thieves would seize Buksil and rob him of the memory crystal!

'Oh my god, this is.....!'

While Ark was sighing with despair, the Sailor Moon used the [Penetration] scroll on Ark. They needed his name in order to use the

[Banish] scroll. Ark used footwork to try to avoid it but he couldn't avoid the absolute power of the scroll. Once the Sailor Moon figured out Ark's name, he was convinced of victory and lifted the [Banish] scroll.

"His name is Ark? I'll remember that. But today you have to disappear. Target Ark, [Banish]!"

The red light from the scroll impacted with Ark. It was an attack he couldn't avoid! Once it touched Ark, a red warning message appeared.

-The [Banish] scroll had been activated.

<You will be banished to a random destination 10 km away>

'Ah, no-!'

At the same time, there was an enormous sucking force and he was propelled into the air. Ark would be blown away 10 km in a blink of an eye.

'It's over. The memory crystal.....'

At that moment, a miracle idea appeared in Ark's head. The opponent had used a rare scroll. This was truly the effect of a rare scroll. But he couldn't afford to think about it now. The moment he was sucked into the air, Ark reflexively shouted. It had only been a few seconds since the scroll hit but Ark had already flown 20 metres.

"Radun, [Magnetic] scroll!"

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun spat out the scroll and Ark triggered it.

"Target Buksil, [Magnetic]!"

"Hehehe, I am the King..... Huh? Waaahhh!"

It was at that time. The abnormal effect disappeared and Buksil flew through the sky after Ark. Yes, the desperate method Ark came up with

was to use a scroll to oppose the effect of another scroll! However, [Banish] was a very expensive and rare scroll. The scroll to stop it was probably another rare scroll. Ark's purpose wasn't to oppose the scroll but to escape with Buksil. So he came up with the method of using the [Magnetic] scroll! It was a scroll to pull the target to the user. It had been dumb luck that he bought the scroll from Ronnie. In fact, [Magnetic] was completely cheap compared to the [Banish] scroll. However, he had managed to use the effects of the cheap scroll to counteract against the rare scroll. That was the charm of using scrolls in New World! Anyway, Buksil flew towards him when he activated the [Magnetic] scroll. The Sailor Moon looked at the distant Buksil and Ark with disgusted eyes.

"What, what the? This is?"

Ark and Buksil managed to escape thanks to the [Banish] scroll. The thieves were lost for words at the absurd situation.

'Damn!'

Ark glared at Buksil. Buksil instantly froze as he saw the look. But he didn't care if Ark was staring and just continued crying.

"Sob sob sob, Baekgu! Baekgu!"

The reason that Buksil had shed tears for several hours was Baekgu. When Ark had been hit by [Banish], he used the effect of [Magnetic] to save Buksil. In fact, he had a few more [Magnetism] scrolls. Ark thought that Baekgu was important so he also wanted to save Baekgu. However, he only used [Magnetic] after he had been hit by [Banish]. The effects of [Banish] only worked within a certain range so it was a miracle that he had managed to save Buksil. Anyway, Baekgu had been abandoned while surrounded by the thieves. Even if he couldn't see it, Baekgu's fate was clear. During the hot summer, the faithful dog Baekgu was unfortunately simmering in a pot thanks to his Master. After escaping from Bosaga village, Buksil was in a crazy state. It was to the extent that Buksil tried to attack Ark.

"Why did you rescue me? If I die then I would be resurrected but Baekgu won't!"

"Damn, do you think I did it on purpose? Don't I look troubled as well?"

"I don't know! It's Ark-nim. Ark-nim killed Baekgu! Waaaaah, Baekgu should be alive! Ahh, poor Baekgu. Sob sob sob! Baekgu!"

Buksil lay soulless on the ground and continued shedding tears. But that wasn't the reason Ark was annoyed. Ark also felt pain at the death of Baekgu the faithful dog. Anyway, he had succeeded in defending Buksil and the memory crystal. Thankfully, the [Banish] scroll had also sent him 10 km away from those guys. The destination of [Banish] was random. And because it left no marks, the thieves wouldn't be able to track Ark.

Fortunately, Ark had been moved near a village. He waited until Buksil calmed down before mentioning the main subject.

"I didn't want to say this but Baekgu's death is your fault."

"What are you saying?"

"The thieves were chasing you so desperately for the memory crystal."

"Memory crystal? What do you mean? You can buy that at any store....."

"That's not what I mean. Those fellows want the video stored in your memory crystal."

"V-video?"

"When you saw those guys for the first time, weren't they doing some sort of business? They think that you recorded the scene with the magic projector. It's because of the magic projector on your head. The uproar is because they want to take away the memory crystal with the video preserved in it. How about it? I'll confirm it first. Did you take a video of those guys?"

"I haven't checked the scenes yet. The video was filmed from the crystal inserted in my eyeball."

Ark sighed with relief at Buksil's answer. What if there had been all that commotion just to discover Buksil hadn't taken the video? Then Buksil asked in a voice that indicated he didn't understand.

"But why? The video is the same as everybody else!"

"That....."

Ark finally explained the whole story. In reality, the thieves were a part of a wanted criminal syndicate. And Buksil had accidentally filmed a black market transaction by the criminals. If the police saw the video of the transaction then they might be able to discover some clues to where the criminals were hiding.

"That's why those fellows were pursuing you so much."

"That's such a ridiculous thing.....!"

As expected, Buksil's face became ridiculous when he heard the explanation. That was the reason why Ark confessed it. Buksil wasn't in a normal state from losing Baekgu. If he just told Buksil to take out the memory crystal then he didn't know how Buksil would react. But if he talked about a criminal organization, then Buksil would shrink with fear and take out the memory crystal. That was what he thought. However, Ark made a mistake in confessing everything.

"Do you see now? It is really dangerous. Luckily, I know a detective really well so hand me the memory crystal. He'll take care of the rest."

"I don't want to."

Buksil said as he turned his head. Ark stared with stunned eyes at the unexpected situation.

"What? You don't want to? Why are you saying that now?"

“Yes. What about it? In the end, Baekgu died because of that memory crystal. So shouldn’t I keep the memory crystal that Baekgu risked his life for?”

“What are you talking about? The dangerous criminals are targeting that!”

“Sheesh! Don’t make me laugh. A crime organization? I’m not afraid of those guys. Anyway, they only know my New World ID. If the police can’t find someone using just the ID then how can the criminal organization? And aren’t they wanted criminals?”

Buksil was surprisingly smart. However, he still had a trick up his sleeve to persuade Buksil.

“Yes, they’re wanted! It is an obligation of the public to cooperate with the police!”

“It is my freedom to decide whether to cooperate or not. Korea is a free democratic country!”

.....But his trick failed. Ark tried a few more times but Buksil wouldn’t budge.

“I was contracted to film scenes of Ark-nim. So Ark-nim has no rights to any other videos that I take. The memory crystal was also bought with my money.”

His words did make some sense. Buksil had been with Ark for a long time. It was natural for him to pick up some things. But Ark really was in a horrible situation. Why did that guy have to be so smart at such a time? In addition, if he tried to kill Buksil to retrieve the memory crystal then he would just revive in Bosaga. So he had no way to make Buksil cooperate.

Of course there were methods to take away the opponent’s goods in New World. One common method among chaotic users was to use the [Robbery] and [Seize] skill. The thieves were probably planning to use this method on Buksil. However, Ark had no such scrolls. While he

bought a lot of scrolls from the thieves, only chaotic NPCs sold the [Robbery] or [Seize] scroll. It was impossible that Ronnie would have those sorts of scrolls.

‘Even if I have the scrolls.....’

No matter what, he didn’t want to use the scroll on his colleague and then kill him. In addition, if he used the scrolls clumsily and then Buksil disconnected then the problem would be even more serious. Not only the memory crystal but the japtem he entrusted to Buksil would fly away.

‘So far, that guy hasn’t quit playing the game despite the many abuses he went through. But now Buksil is insane from Baekgu’s death. I can’t be assured of his actions.’

In this situation, Ark eventually lifted the white flag. In fact, Ark knew this. Buksil wouldn’t give it up even if he had to die. He meant it when he said he wouldn’t give the memory crystal. However, Ark also didn’t want to beat up Buksil. But personal feelings aside, he still needed the memory crystal.

‘I guess Buksil’s request will be to improve his treatment.’

.....Okay. Then what do I have to do to make you give me the memory crystal?”

When Ark asked in a weakened voice, Buksil immediately replied like he had been waiting for it.

“800 gold.”

“What?”

“Didn’t you hear me? 800 gold!”

“Y-you want money? Weren’t you upset by Baekgu’s death just now?”

“I’m saying this because Baekgu died protecting the memory crystal.”

Buksil said tearfully as he thought about Baekgu.

“Didn’t you say the memory crystal had a clue about the crime organization? If what Ark-nim said is correct, Baekgu was a smart dog who helped the real police. If we be terrible if such a smart dog devoted his who life to it only to receive no repayment!”

“.....So?”

“I will use the money from Ark-nim to build a statue of Baekgu in the square of Schudenberg’s capital city, Selebrid. Once I accomplish it, everyone will know about Baekgu. I checked and 800 gold should be enough to erect a statue in Selebrid.”

“You want money just to build a statue of a dog?”

Ark muttered with amazed eyes. Then Buksil shouted with a displeased expression.

“It’s not a dog, it’s Baekgu! The smart dog Baekgu! Baekgu is.....ugh, Baekgu!”

Buksil once again started wailing as emotions welled inside him. Then Racard muttered with an impressed face.

“Ohhhhh, I really can’t see this scene without tears. I don’t know anyone who would think about building a statue for their pet dog. Normally they would throw them away once dead from old age or illness. Huk, I would’ve preferred to meet such a Master. I’m sorry for ignoring you in the meantime Buksil. You really are a great owner.”

“Shut up, huh?”

Sparks flew from Ark’s eyes as he glared at Racard. No, sparks also flew between the left and right side of his brain. 800 gold? 800 gold for a pet dog? No, apart from the price. Wasting 800 gold just to build a dog statue? He really thought the guy needed a bullet in his head. Even without the bullet inside his head, the pig needed his sanity back. Unfortunately, the person holding the gun was Buksil. Just like

Buksil said, there was no way for the criminals to find him in real life. That also applied to Ark and Isyuram. With no way to find Buksil in real life to get the memory crystal, his hands were tied.

‘But 800 gold for one memory crystal.....’

He wanted to put aside the investigation. But he knew how important it was for Isyuram. Isyuram was the one who wanted the information so he could pass on Buksil’s request of 800 gold to him. But Ark didn’t have the same thought. Isyuram was more than a simple taekwondo teacher to Ark. Ark was in Isyuram’s debt. If it hadn’t been for Isyuram then Ark would’ve ended up in hospital from the gangsters Andel sent after him. And knowing Andel’s character, he would’ve continued sending gangsters after Ark.

‘At that time, Teacher was the one who talked to Andel’s father. In fact, Teacher might’ve even been disadvantaged by that incident. But Teacher didn’t waver.’

Normally he wanted money for favours. However, Ark didn’t think about money when helping Isyuram. If Ark was in danger than Isyuram wouldn’t hesitate to jump in. Ark always paid back any grudge. That was Ark’s cardinal rule. With one word from Buksil it would be over and he wouldn’t be able to help Isyuram. Now he strongly wanted to leave the money to Isyuram. No, how much money was needed to build a dog statue in New World?

‘Yes, I can’t ask Teacher for 800 gold. If I tell Teacher the 800 gold is for a dog statue.....ah, that’s not money well spent!’

Ark thought like that. No, he might go crazy if he thought about it too hard. Fortunately he still have the monthly salary from Global Exos and thanks to his new sale strategies, he had been receiving more money for his items. But when he tried to hand over the money, as expected his hands stopped moving. Ark was tortured for a while before he made a suggestion.

“Okay. I’ll give you 800 gold for a dog statue.”

“Eh? R-really?”

When Ark obediently agreed, Buksil looked at him with shocked eyes. Of course, Ark was agreeing obediently.

“There is one condition.”

“Condition? Are you trying a trick?”

“No, that’s not it. Didn’t you say you wanted to build a statue of Baekgu in Selebrid square?”

“.....So?”

“Then can you wait for the money until we return to Selebrid? I don’t have 800 gold on me right now. Give me until we reach Selebrid for the deadline for payment. How about it?”

Buksil looked at him suspiciously.

“You’ll definitely sign a contract?”

“Of course! Do you think I would trick you?”

“Aren’t you going to look for a way to cheat me in the meantime?”

That was correct. He really was a sharp fellow! As more time passed, the pig’s awareness of his tricks only increased. At Ark’s expression, Buksil spoke in a decisive voice.

“I won’t hand the memory crystal to you until you write the contract. Don’t try to decrease the amount of money. Once again, Baekgu sacrificed his life to defend it. This time I won’t back down. The amount is 800 gold. No matter what happens, that payment amount won’t change. The date of payment is until you reach Selebrid and it can’t be longer than a month. Once a month passes, you have to pay immediately no matter what. It is the Baekgu statue establishment fund.”

“Okay, I understand. Write the contract! Stop talking about Baekgu so much!”

Ark was fed up and forced him to write up the contract.

-A Merchant's Agreement.

<Contractor: Ark=Buksil>

Once Ark and Buksil arrive in Selebrid, you will pay 800 gold. If you don't arrive in Selebrid before the time limit of 1 month then you will have to pay the money immediately. If the promised amount isn't paid then the Merchant's guild will extract a penalty of 2,400 gold from Ark's Comprehensive Store in Lancel village. And Buksil will receive 80% of the penalty, giving him the right to 1920 gold.

It was a humiliating contract.

'That dog statue really will be built with my money.'

Whenever he saw the contract, a sigh automatically emerged. In fact, Ark had a plan when he decided to write the contract. He needed to pay Buksil the money after arriving in Selebrid. However, Ark was presently in Bristania and had no intention of returning to Selebrid yet. He thought it was possible to give excuses and delay payment for infinity while he never returned to Selebrid. However, Buksil had become smarted and embedded a payment date of 1 month. Even his last plan had been blocked.

'Dammit, during that one month I have to think of a way to save my 800 gold.'

Fortunately, not long ago Ark had threatened Agathe and received 2000 gold. The payment extended over 6 months so in two months he would have around 670 gold. Two months in game time was around 20 days so he had already secured 670 gold. If he continued hunting and collecting japtem then he should be able to raise enough. Of course, he still had to pay the bill even if he dragged it out for 20 days. It didn't change the fact that money would still be lost. However, it wasn't possible to take the money he currently had in his pocket so he devised this method. Anyway, Ark was handed the memory crystal after the contract

was written. After the video files were extracted, the memory crystal was soon destroyed. The video files he paid 800 gold for! Ark searched through the videos but couldn't find a clue.

'Did I lose money for no reason?'

Ark suddenly had that thought as he received the video files. Well, this was police work so Ark didn't want to intervene anymore.

"Anyway, the situation is finished with this!"

Ark sighed with relief as he sent the video file to Isyuram's email. Despite receiving 800 gold, Buksil was still crying over Baekgu but Ark shook off his displeasure. He felt a sense of accomplishment after helping Isyuram. And now that the dire situation was over, an item popped into his head.

'Now I can finally eat my Necromancer's Immortality Pill!'

Yes, it was the Necromancer's Immortality Pill that he left at the Magic Institute warehouse in Ciel! With 81 hours required, it had finally been completed after four days. That was the reason Ark came running to a village with a Magic Institute branch. Yet he had no intention of going back to Ciel through the Letter Movement. Not only was it hard to endure but the Letter Movement was too expensive. One use cost 50 gold! He received a discount as a full member of the Magic Institute but it was still 42 gold and 50 silver. Anyway, it wasn't necessary for Ark to return to Ciel. The private warehouse for a Magic Institute member could be accessed from every branch.

"I'd like to take out the item I left in the private warehouse at the Ciel's Magic Institute branch."

"I understand. What's your name?"

"It is Ark."

"Ah, you are Ark-nim. I'll send it immediately."

All the magicians at the Magic Institute were familiar with Ark. The magician who transferred it had a respectful expression, just like Rabent the branch manager in Ciel. Fortunately, Ark finally regained his Survival Cooking pot after 4 days. Inside the pot was a small black pill.

‘The Necromancer’s Immortality Pill!’

An information window appeared as soon as Ark grabbed it.

-The maturation process has ended and the Necromancer’s Immortality Pill has been completed.

You have completed the ‘Necromancer’s Immortality Pill’ from the secret technique that has been passed down since ancient times. The Immortality Pill is one of the hidden secrets in New World. It allows you to maximise the power contained in the Monster’s Essence and apply it to the player.

Making the Immortality Pill is one of the biggest honours for Survival Cooking chefs and is an achievement that has significant implications.

*Fame increases by 800

*Intelligence increases by 30.

* Survival cooking skill increases by 40.

* The ‘Monster’s Pill’ information has been updated.

<Number of Immortality Pills completed: 7>

“I finally finished it!”

Ark lifted the pill with trembling hands. When calculating the time used to gather the ingredients, he had invested several months into it. Then the immortality pill was finally completed after a long 96 hours. Was making it easy? When thinking about the trouble he went through on the ferry to prevent the degree of completion from falling, he really felt like crying. However, he finally received a tangible item for his

enormous time and effort. He couldn't know the effects before he ate it so he wouldn't be able to sell it, but that wasn't a problem.....

'Even if it is possible to sell it, I never even thought of giving up an item I put so much effort into. Besides, it has been strangely noisy around me lately. Apart from the thieves, it would really be a headache if I encounter Bread and Redian again. I need to increase my stats a bit more.'

Ark tried to calm his heart and swallowed the pill. With a loud sound effect, the information window appeared.

-Necromancer's Immortality Pill (Immortality Pill Rating: A, Degree of Completion: A)

A powerful immortality pill which contains the Necromancer Tamura's strength. It grants the special abilities of a necromancer.

*There is an added bonus according to the degree of completion.

<All stats +8, Intelligence +20, Magic Resistance +20%, Resistance to all Diseases +20%>

-The 'Dark Fog' stat has been created.

*Dark Fog (+20):

'Dark Fog' increases resistance to magic and physical attacks with the darkness attribute.

As an added bonus, it also increases the attack power of all physical and magic attacks with the darkness attribute. For every 1 point in the Dark Fog stat, it will increase physical and magic resistance to the dark attribute by 0.1%. Your damage will also rise by 0.1%. Stat distribution is impossible and Dark Fog will rise slightly every time you use attacks with the darkness attribute.

-Racial skill 'Soul Extortion' has been learnt.

Soul Extortion (Beginner, Active):

The specialty of a necromancer is to use their knowledge of life and darkness to summon creatures from another dimension. The power needed to control such creatures is Spiritual Power. Soul Extortion is dark attribute technique which extorts the souls of monsters to increase Spiritual Power.

When using Soul Extortion, it is possible to deal 50 damage. In addition, it is possible to exceed the maximum amount of Spiritual Power is Soul Extortion is used a lot. (Extorting strong monsters will cause Spiritual Power to rise faster.)

* Soul Extortion will succeed when it deals 70% of the damage. The user's soul will receive terrible damage if they die and the resurrection time will be increased to a maximum of 72 hours.

"Ohhhh, it is indeed an A class immortality pill!"

Ark exclaimed at the sight of the information window. The additional bonus was all stats +8, Intelligence +20, Magic Resistance +20% and Resistance to all Diseases +20%! If he included intelligence, it was like he had gained 7 levels. There was also addition magic resistance and disease resistance! A lot of high level monsters caused disease so it was a very useful stat. But was that all? A new stat and skill were also created.

"I don't need to see anything else. Dark Fog is a jackpot!"

Dark Fog was similar to the Resilience stat he learnt when he ate the Slime's Immortality Pill. But there was one part that was decisively different from Resilience. The stat increased his attack and defense against the dark attribute. It didn't apply to his general skills but most of Ark's profession-specific skills were of the dark attribute. In other words, wasn't it a stat specifically for his profession?

'There's also Soul Extortion.....'

Ark looked at the information for Soul Extortion with an ambiguous expression. Recently Ark had really noticed the shortage of Spiritual Power. Even before he changed professions, Ark had been worried about his lack of Spiritual Power. Then he received the Area Declaration skill Glory of the Night which consumed 400 Spiritual Power and 2000 mana. The Area Declaration used 400 Spiritual Power with just one use. Spiritual Power also had an unusually slow recovery time so he wouldn't be able to summon his familiars. In addition, the Ghost Knight Corps skill also required 300 Spiritual Power. When considering that Soul Extortion could increase Spiritual Power beyond its maximum, it really was a jackpot. However, the information window didn't explain how he could successfully use Soul Extortion to raise Spiritual Power beyond its maximum.

It would be useless if it only increased his Spiritual Power by 1 since he would have to use it hundreds of times. Besides, there was also an effect on the user. Soul Extortion had to deal 70% of the damage to have a proper effect? It only did 50 damage so how many times would he have to attack to deal 70% of the damage?

'Well, it is a skill that doesn't eat mana.....'

Ark was content with the skill since it could hopefully raise his Spiritual Power. Even without Soul Extortion, the bonus stats and Dark Fog were rewarding enough. How many users in New World would be able to receive such stat bonuses at once?

"Now that is finished. All that's left is the <Home of the Fire Draconian> quest!"

Ark's next destination was Hwaryong Mountain in the north of Bristania! After eating the immortality pill, Ark ran across Bristania filled with motivation.

"Baekgu~!"

With tears and a runny nose, the pig followed behind him.

Act 8: Pirate Clean-up!

“Did you wait long?”

“No, I just came.”

“Really? I’ll get you something.”

Lee Myung-ryong called a shop assistant over with a gesture and took a seat.

“What will you eat?”

“For the moment, 2 servings of the parfait special set! And I.....”

Lee Myung-ryong ordered without looking at the menu. Hyun-woo asked doubtfully.

“Are there more people coming?”

“No. I promised you before. If you help me retrieve the video file then I’ll buy you 3 servings of the parfait special set.”

“.....I didn’t mean to buy it all at once.”

“Really? Then 2 servings of the parfait special set.”

After the sales assistant grabbed the menu and returned to the counter, he started whispering about those two. It was reasonable. It was currently 10.30 in the morning. Those two were the only people in the cafe so the atmosphere was uncomfortable. Since they ordered parfaits as soon as they sat down, it was impossible for eyes not to be drawn to them. Furthermore, Hyun-woo was over 180 cm tall. Although his build didn’t look that extraordinary, exercise had hardened his body. In addition, Lee Myung-ryong’s sharp gaze was enough to make gangsters cry. The first time Hyun-woo saw Lee Myung-ryong, he thought he was more like a gangster than a policeman. Yet the two men just sat down and ordered parfait? What business did they have? However, Hyun-woo wasn’t concerned with the eyes of other people.

‘The parfait still isn’t done.....’

Hyun-woo looked at people drinking coffee and thought they had it good. At a cheap cafe, coffee costs 8,000~9,000 won. Vending machine coffee only cost 1000 won and he could drink eight times more coffee. It was so absurd that he could only laugh. So every time Hyun-woo came to the cafe, he would order the parfait. He didn’t even like the parfait. But it wasn’t possible to buy parfait from the vending machine so at least he could think it was a fair price. In other words, he felt less ripped off. No matter the game or reality, Hyun-woo related everything to money.

“But does Teacher also like parfait? Why are you eating a child’s food?”

“I haven’t slept for two days. My body now wants a lot of sugar.”

Lee Myung-ryong muttered as he stroked his scraggly beard. It wasn’t just his beard. Lee Myung-ryong normally didn’t wear neat attire but it was particularly serious today. His eyes were also really haggard which thick dark circles beneath it. It was a face which was the symbol of fatigue.

“This is all thanks to you.”

“Me?”

“The video file you sent me.”

“Oh, that’s right! Then you couldn’t sleep because of the video means....?”

“It is safe.”

Lee Myung-ryong laughed and replied.

“If I delayed for even a few hours then the video file would be worthless.”

“What are you saying?”

Hyun-woo asked as the shop assistant lowered a parfait. A sigh automatically emerged as he saw the parfait decorated with juice and ice cream.

‘This is a parfait worth 542 gold and 50 silver.....’

When he considered the money that went into this parfait, it was enough to cause tears. Lee Myung-ryong crunched the ornamental umbrella that was plugged into the parfait and began to talk again.

“Originally I’m not supposed to tell information to people unrelated to the investigation but I figured I can tell you. However, you wouldn’t understand if I tell you all the details. So I’ll just summarize the situation.”

The contents were related to the criminal organization. In dramas or movies, people normally talked about it in a serious voice. However, Lee Myung-ryong just seemed like a next door ajusshi talking as he ate the ice cream while playing with the umbrella. Although the case was related to a criminal organization, Lee Myung-ryong seemed completely different from the captain of the SWAT team who incited fear in criminals. Although it was an investigation, he didn’t feel the need to be serious.

“You said you saw the video?”

“Yes. But wasn’t the information just insubstantial?”

“It’s natural that you would think the contents were insignificant. Because those guys only used code words during their dialogue in the movie. No, it was closer to a password than a code word.”

“Password?”

“If a criminal organization isn’t clever these days than they wouldn’t be able to survive for long. These days they often used indirect words when referring to specific things. Furthermore, the meaning often changed so the police often don’t know that it means. But they made a mistake once. There was the word H-56 in the video.”

When Hyun-woo heard the word H-56 in the video, he also thought it was questionable.

“That word refers to one of the various trading methods that they used.”

According to Lee Myung-ryong’s words, the criminal organization had various illegal trading methods. They would change the route according to the situation. ‘H-56’ was one of the prepared methods which the police still hadn’t completely figured out.

“But by listening to the conversation around the password ‘H-56,’ I could figure out the general principles.”

That was why Lee Myung-ryong hadn’t slept for two days. By watching the video and determining the general principles of the transaction method, the police had figured out their last transaction place. To his surprise, the transaction place Lee Myung-ryong figured out was a coin locker at the train station.

“H-56 is the transaction method which takes advantage of the train station which people from all over the nation uses to communicate with other people in their organization or to deal business. Although sometimes it goes through a courier or post office, there was the chance it could fall into the hands of the general public and then there would be police supervision.”

It was also easy for the criminal organization to discover the police supervision. And if things went bad in the middle and the police had to pounce then they wouldn’t be able to capture the people affiliated with the organization.

“In addition, those ‘items’ go through New World so it won’t be easy to track the funds. Even if we attack and seize the ‘thing,’ there is no evidence that it isn’t just a lost item.”

‘That’s amazing!’

Hyun-woo once again realized that Lee Myung-ryong was a police officer. It felt like a war between policemen and criminal organizations

in Hong Kong movies. In fact, Lee Myung-ryong hadn't even explained 1/10ths of the information. The criminal organization's dealings were more calculated than it appeared and the method Korea's police force used to combat it was unimaginable to the public. But don't misunderstand. Despite the public not knowing, Korea's crime rate was low. Korea's low crime rate was thanks to the police fighting against the criminals in order to maintain the public's lifestyle.

"But it is a little strange."

Hyun-woo suddenly said.

"That video was taken a few days ago. If they knew that the video was taken then wouldn't they move quickly to take back the dangerous contents?"

"They tried but it wasn't possible."

"They can't?"

"Clearly they monitored the route of the thing clearly. The items are worth a few billion won so it would be a fatal blow if they lost it. But there is a chance that a henchman could leak the information. So the only one who can accurately monitor the transaction route is the boss of the organization. Garret and Jepeteu who appeared in the video are only middle ranked bosses."

Although Garrett and Jepeteu thought it was dangerous, they couldn't interrupt the transaction. Since they weren't supposed to talk about the transactions but it was caught on video in the game, they couldn't bear to tell the boss. There was also no reason to think that Buksil would take the video to the police. Still, they couldn't ignore the possibility which was why they tried to so desperately recover it. Lee Myung-ryong then laughed and said.

"Anyway, that stuff finally arrived at its final destination last night. In other words, if we were a few days late than the video would have no value. That's why I told you it was safe."

After Lee Myung-ryong grasped the situation, hurriedly rallied people from the Special Crime Countermeasures division and hid them near the coin locker. By midnight, they managed to arrest the person and collected the thing.

“If we tracked that fellow then we could discover the place the wanted criminals are hiding. But the henchman we caught is a subordinate of Jepeteu. Jepeteu probably wouldn’t show up until the end. The subordinate would’ve probably disposed of the goods and then hand it to Jepeteu through New World. So we decided to catch him for the moment.”

Of course, it was still a secret that the police force was investigating in New World. Because of that, Lee Myung-ryong had to be careful that Jepeteu didn’t sense he was the one who arrested the henchman. If the police could figure out the henchman’s route and deploy traffic police to search similar vehicles then they could grab other henchmen.

“That’s actually why I wanted to talk to you today. When we captured him there was a murder nearby and we questioned the henchman after that. Jepeteu was still searching for the video. I think he had no luck. And the risk from the video is gone after the thing was reclaimed so they shouldn’t chase you anymore.”

While there was no obvious connection with the video, his henchman was caught by the police. In this situation, Jepeteu and the organization members would have no choice but to be tense. It was like that in reality but in the game, they could take a break while watching the situation. Fortunately, Ark’s bad relationship with the thieves was ended.

“But you didn’t catch most of the organization.”

“Why do you think I stayed up all night?”

Lee Myung-ryong inserted the remaining parfait into his mouth and laughed.

"After we arrested him at midnight, we questioned that fellow for a long time. This is a fight against time. It would probably only be 12 hours until they discover that a follower was caught. But the police had already obtained the necessary information after 5 hours."

"Was it Teacher? I don't need to see to understand what happened to that person."

Hyun-woo was familiar with Lee Myung-ryong's violence after experiencing his version of sparring and muttered. Then Lee Myung-ryong jumped at the unexpected words and exclaimed.

"Hey, Hey! What are you thinking? Do you think I would break his two arms? I am a democratic policeman."

"Does the democratic police beat people up?"

"Am I a bully? Anyone who listens will be scared. And recently his arms had been in pain so there was no need to beat him up. Have you heard of a plea bargain?"

"Plea bargain? The one that frequently appears in foreign movies?"

"Yes, that's right. Our country also does it. While that guy is a criminal, we cut him a deal. He's just a henchman so he did odd jobs and chores. In exchange for the plea bargain, he will tell us what he knows."

"I'm glad, but I also think it is a bit pathetic."

"I don't know what you've imagined but this isn't a movie. Will you die for you hyung-nim? Would he sacrifice himself for you? Don't make me laugh. Gangsters in the past and present don't have any guts." The gangster became nervous as he heard Lee Myung-ryong's voice.

"I'm only going to offer this just once. You're different from your hyung-nim. While you could live a new life thanks to your hyung-nim, you don't have that much moral obligation to him. Since you're hyung-nim has surrounded himself with guys like you."

After the henchman heard Lee Myung-ryong's 'threat,' he confessed a great deal of information in exchange for the plea bargain. Of course, he was just a henchman so they were unable to obtain satisfactory confidential information. But they were somewhat lucky? The henchman was quite close to some people in the organization so he knew their hiding place.

"Before they heard the news that the henchman was caught, the detectives had surrounded it. Those fellows didn't expect that we could move that fast."

The purpose of the detectives surrounded the hideout wasn't to catch the criminals. Lee Myung-ryong's purpose was to arrest all of the criminal organization! In order to catch the big fish, he had to release the small ones. Once the organization members heard the news that a follower was caught, they would have to take action. The detectives kept an eye on their movements and collected information, while planning a way to arrest Jepeteu the interim boss.

"It's just starting now."

Despite not sleeping for two days, Lee Myung-ryong was full of energy. It reminded him of his youthful days fighting against gangs and criminal organizations. In fact, Lee Myung-ryong hadn't expected that he could attain this result from the game when he first started New World. Finding one person in a city of hundreds of thousands wasn't easy. It was a lot harder when considering that millions connected to New World! He couldn't even understand the game system so how could Lee Myung-ryong find the wanted criminals? But Lee Myung-ryong's efforts, Ark's help and a little luck managed to bring him to these results. If he didn't have a keen interest than he wouldn't be a policeman in South Korea. Of course, there was a long way to go before he could sweep up all of the criminal organization. But Lee Myung-ryong was full of confidence from the excellent results so far.

"While those guys are hiding, they will concentrate on building a base in New World. And I'm already trusted immensely by those guys."

Lee Myung-ryong laughed and spoke. However, he couldn't be that smug about it. Lee Myung-ryong's credit rating within the bandit group had only risen because he was killed by Baekgu in the horror castle. The thieves had misunderstood the reason why Lee Myung-ryong was there. Thanks to Garam's claims, Lee Myung-ryong was now formally a member of the bandit group. Of course, he didn't have enough influence yet but he could seize the opportunity. While the hidden detectives investigated in reality, Lee Myung-ryong would infiltrate the group in the game.

"Therefore I will be busy for a while."

Just as he was standing up from his seat, Lee Myung-ryong suddenly remembered something and said.

"Ah, I spoke to the section chief of the Special Crimes Countermeasures division about you. While the incident isn't over yet, the investigation has opened because of the video so the Police Commissioner might give you a commendation."

"Please don't worry about it."

Hun-woo laughed unpleasantly and shook his head. Hyun-woo didn't want to appear in front of other people. Then Lee Myung-ryong smiled and added.

"You don't want the bonus reward for the crucial tip?"

".....Thank you."

"Then wait for the good news."

Lee Myung-ryong laughed and went back to the police agency. After separating from Lee Myung-ryong, Hyun-woo went home feeling refreshed. After starting New World, Hyun-woo escaped from the life where he had to worry about meals. After helping Lee Myung-ryong this time, he realized he had a sense of social justice. Hyun-woo was satisfied at the idea of helping. Yet Hyun-woo never guessed what

would happen next. The effort to catch the wanted criminals had started to affect New World.....

“Mother, I’m home!”

“Ah, you’ve come?”

After Hyun-woo entered, a booming voice could be heard from the living room. The man sitting down on the living room sofa was Gwon Hwa-rang. It wasn’t an abrupt visit. After his mother started the outpatient treatment, Gwon Hwa-rang could often be seen visiting the house. Why? Well, wasn’t the reason clear?

“Did you come to flirt with my mother?”

“He only came here to talk.”

Although his mother scowled, Gwon Hwa-rang just naturally laughed.

“Well, that’s right. I have to flirt before I lose her to other guys.”

After Gwon Hwa-rang started New World, this was the part that changed the most. While Hyun-woo first met Gwon Hwa-rang, he had seemed like a bear. At that time, Gwon Hwa-rang had been really blunt. After dozens of years as a special instructor, he wasn’t an ordinary policeman. After he got injured and retired, that tendency to be blunt got a lot worse. Thanks to his disappointment with the police agency and society, his mind had been damaged for a bit. It was only after starting New World that Gwon Hwa-rang began to change. After playing the game and interacting with NPCs, Gwon Hwa-rang had his passion in justice restored. If somebody didn’t bother working then they wouldn’t receive a reward. To the frustrated Gwon Hwa-rang, New World was like paradise compared to reality.

‘That is also one of the ways his character has changed.’

Hyun-woo thought this as he saw Gwon Hwa-rang walk to the kitchen. Gwon Hwa-rang had become more active in pursuing his mother. Before Gwon Hwa-rang had used his injury as an obstacle. Since

Gwon Hwa-rang was so proud of his strength, it was an obstacle that was difficult to accept. So he had been passive when caring for Hyun-woo's mother. Previously Gwon Hwa-rang had gotten drunk and started complaining to him.

"I really like your mother. Despite what other people said, it's not just because of sympathy. I'm serious. I don't care what other people say. Although I don't care.....I was scared that you or your mother would be uncomfortable by my attention. And taking care of your mother with an injury like this....."

His strong sense of responsibility was a burden to Gwon Hwa-rang. But while listening to Gwon Hwa-rang recently, it appeared like a lot of those worries had disappeared. In fact, Gwon Hwa-rang's physical obstacle had disappeared a long time ago. However, sometimes the mental state was the biggest obstacle to somebody with disabilities. Despite his limp healing, his mind and body hadn't accepted it so he still behaved like he was injured. But after spending most of his days in New World, that mental obstacle had relaxed a lot. Hyun-woo had heard that virtual reality games could also be used as a therapy for those sorts of mental obstacles.

Now Gwon Hwa-rang was almost back to normal. The confident Gwon Hwa-rang didn't hide his feelings about Hyun-woo's mother anymore. It was unnecessary to say but Hyun-woo preferred this Gwon Hwa-rang.

'I hope my mother improves quickly so those two can get married.....'

Hyun-woo was hoping for that.

"Then you should flirt harder. I'll go to the studio so I don't interfere."

"Oh, then I'm thankful. Aren't your senses really quick now?"

Gwon Hwa-rang laughed and praised him. Hyun-woo was about to leave for his game studio when he suddenly asked.

"But ajusshi, how is that work you started?"

"Huh? Work I started? What do you mean?"

"I'm talking about the clean-up of the lawless port."

"Ah, you mean that?"

Gwon Hwa-rang scratched his head with an irritated expression before sighing.

"It has become slightly troublesome."

"Troublesome? Then you failed to track the pirate ships?"

"No. Tracking was a success. In the end....."

Gwon Hwa-rang drank cold water and explained the situation. The day that Hyun-woo had been attacked by the pirates, Gwon Hwa-rang had followed them and determined the location of the lawless port. The lawless port was a small island near the east coast of Seutandal. Once JusticeMan figured out the location, the battle fleet was dispatched as planned and they tried to attack the lawless port.

"But I lost two combat ships and retreated."

"Were the pirates at the lawless port that strong?"

"Well, it's not that they're strong. But the problem isn't the pirates. With Isabel's investment, the battle fleet consisted of 40 transport and battle ships. On the other hand, the pirate ships gathered at the lawless port only added up to 30 speedboats. After arriving, I could batter them in a matter of hours."

"Then?"

".....I can't enter the lawless port."

Gwon Hwa-rang sighed and muttered. Neither Gwon Hwa-rang nor Hyun-woo thought that there would be an ambush near the lawless port. The ambush was the reef spread near the lawless port like a landmine. Yes, the Hermes alliance knew about the island when they entered Seutandal thanks to the Nakujuk and built the lawless port there. The only way to enter the lawless island was through the ocean. But the

sea surrounding the island was dangerous. Under the ocean was a spread out reef waiting to sink its teeth into boats that enter the lawless port. Furthermore, the influence of the reef meant that there were sometimes whirlpools that would swallow ships. Although it seemed like an ordinary ocean, it was the same as a maze holding traps for unsuspecting ships. And naturally the lawless pirates knew the location of every reef and whirlpool perfectly. The battle fleet knew nothing about the reef and whirlpools as they chased the pirates. The results of the naval battle could be easily seen.

“We sent some divers underwater but it wasn’t easy to grasp the terrain. The underwater terrain is too complicated and we couldn’t watch the movements of the pirates either. So the battle fleet is just surrounding the lawless port for the moment. Fortunately the pirates can’t go around plundering either.....”

But it wasn’t possible for the battle fleet to be stuck at the lawless port forever. Not all the pirates in New World were at the lawless port. There were also pirates aimed at the merchant fleets from the continent. Ever since Seutandal rose, the maritime activity had increased so the pirate strongholds had extended to the continent and Seutandal. If the entire battle fleet was tied to the lawless port than they had no way to stop those pirates. However, it wasn’t possible to turn the battle fleet around. The battle fleet consisted of 40 ships while the pirates had 30. They had the numerical advantage but it wasn’t an absolute. If the combat ships near the lawless port were reduced than there was a chance the pirates would counterattack. In a geographically disadvantaged area, the battle fleet would have no chance if they were outnumbered.

“The problem is even more serious than that. Information that we blocked the lawless port went out to pirates near the continent. If the pirates from the continent and the lawless port join hands then we’ll be attacked from the front and behind. That is the most fearful thing. If the battle fleet is destroyed by the pirates.....”

It wasn't necessary to hear the rest. Currently Seutandal was under the authority of the Baran and the Eastern Nation which is how they managed to attack many users and trade business from the continent. If the pirates seized the sea than that advantage would disappear. Originally Seutandal was a land which lived separately from the continent with no trade between them. If they didn't trade with the continent than they would have no problems surviving. But going back to the previous talk. While they didn't exchange in trade at the beginning, once the exchange took place they had developed rapidly. As a simple example, what would happen if modern day Korea couldn't trade with other countries anymore? Seutandal would rapidly lose its power and their forces would weaken. At that time, if the Hermes alliance invaded with the Nakujuk then there would be no way to defeat them. In the worst case scenario, Haman Fortress might fall under the influence of the Hermes and Nakujuk alliance.

'Now I understand. This is the scenario that the Hermes alliance was planning on!'

Even after Hyun-woo discovered that the lawless port was related to the Hermes alliance, he didn't pay it that much thought. It was annoying but he hadn't thought that the occupied Seutandal could be shaken by pirates. But it was different if they joined hands with pirates from the continent.

'The pirates also need a safe place. But there is no room for the pirates to penetrate the three powers on the continent. Yet the situation is different in Seutandal. If the pirates really accomplish it then the scale will exceed imagination. That strength could make Seutandal into a pirate kingdom.....no doubt. The Hermes alliance had that in mind from the beginning when they constructed the lawless port.'

When he thought about it, Hyun-woo was suddenly afraid. If they got their hands on Seutandal as planned than the Hermes alliance would obtain tremendous power. The Ark's dream of creating a triangular trade route between Lancel-Silvana-Seutandal would burst like a

bubble. No, if the Hermes alliance gained that power than Ark wouldn't even be able to live in New World.

'But if the lawless port is their fortress.....'

A sigh emerged from Hyun-woo's face. It wasn't necessary to say again but Gwon Hwa-rang was a tactical strategist. When participating in the Seutandal war, all the general strategy tactics relating to warfare came from Gwon Hwa-rang. If it wasn't for Gwon Hwa-rang at that time than Seutandal might've already fallen into the hands of the Nakujuk and the Hermes alliance. Yet even Gwon Hwa-rang couldn't find a way to clean up the lawless port. Even if Hyun-woo ran to Seutandal immediately, he wouldn't be able to change anything.

'Is there a way to pass through the deadlock area to reach the lawless port?'

Then an abrupt idea came to Hyun-woo's head. It was the conversation he just had with Lee Myung-ryong. Lee Myung-ryong had managed to capture one of the henchmen in the organization. And he didn't know the hiding place of the other criminals except for his close friends. However, that henchman was in charge of disposing of the goods and then handing it to Jepeteu in New World. Well it was just one henchman and he wasn't the one who moved the funds. Anyway, there was a high probability that he was beside Jepeteu in the game. And Jepeteu often stopped by the lawless port!

'In other words, that henchman must go to the lawless port often with Jepeteu. Then he must know a way to pass through the deadlock area. That's it. Because he had never met a pirate, there was no chance to get information about the lawless port. But now one of the pirates is caught by Teacher. And even with the plea bargain, the henchman will still go to jail for a little bit so there is no need for him to hide information about the lawless port.'

"I might have a method to find a way through the reef!"

"What? R-Really? How?"

"Please wait a moment."

Hyun-woo ran to the living room and called Lee Myung-ryong.

"I understand. In fact, I've actually gone to the lawless port once as well. It was just before Jepeteu attacked you at sea. But I didn't know that you were related to the lawless port and I also didn't know that there were reefs in that zone. The henchman has been with Jepeteu longer so he will likely know the route. I'll hang up for the moment. I'll check and call you back later."

Lee Myung-ryong was presently a part of the bandit group. If Hyun-woo mentioned the lawless port to Lee Myung-ryong then he could get information. However, Hyun-woo had been unaware that Lee Myung-ryong was playing New World. After waiting 10 minutes, Lee Myung-ryong called back.

"Hyun-woo, I found it!"

"Huh? Really?"

"Yes, as expected he is one of the followers who accompanied Jepeteu. After hearing his words, I realized that I met him in New World. He is the one called Sunfish who way always next to Jepeteu. I never imagined that he had used plastic surgery in New World."

Lee Myung-ryong explained and laughed with amazement.

"Huhuhu, that guy has confessed information about the organization so there is no point hiding anything else. After I bought him a bowl of noodles, he immediately drew a map to cross through the reefs to get to the lawless port. It was sent to your house on a motorcycle courier. Then....."

Lee Myung-ryong hesitated and continued talking.

"The one who needs this map is Hwa-rang hyung-nim?"

"Yes, but why?"

“Then could you tell Hwa-rang ajusshi something before you give him the map?”

“What?”

“No, I mean.....I was listening to Sunfish. He said that the lawless port contains several warehouses where the items they looted are stored. I’m not trying to be patronizing but isn’t it because of me that he will manage to occupy the lawless port? It’s been a little hard for me these days so could you ask Hwa-rang hyung-nim to split a bit with me? Of course don’t say that. If you mention that I’m involved then he won’t do it. Oh, of course you can have half of the share that I receive. How about it?”

“.....!”

Hyun-woo listened to Lee Myung-ryong’s words and realized he missed something important. Yes, the lawless port was the stronghold of the pirates! Naturally it would be the place where the pirates disposed of their loot. If the lawless port was occupied, then the Seutandal battle fleet would collect all the items stored. Since it was the spoils of Seutandal, it was natural for it to go to Isabel. But the number 1 contributors of the lawless port invasion were Hyun-woo and Lee Myung-ryong. They had the right to claim a share of the spoils.

‘But for Teacher to be the first one to suggest it.....’

It was proof that Lee Myung-ryong was becoming addicted to the game. However, Lee Myung-ryong didn’t want a share of the spoils for money. After Lee Myung-ryong had encountered Baekgu, he realized how important level was. Even though Lee Myung-ryong was a merchant, he had no chance against Baekgu because of his level. As expected, he needed to raise his level. This was the first time Lee Myung-ryong had been greedy in the game. And the fastest way to raise the level of a merchant was to trade! The more profit he obtained, the more experience he would receive.

The best thing for a merchant was the loot of thieves, aka stolen goods. It wasn't the buying of stolen goods of course. When selling it, the purchase price would be '0'. In other words, the entire sales price was calculated as profit. If he received 10% profit after a business transaction of 1000 gold, he could make 100 gold from the stolen goods. After his troubles in Giran, Lee Myung-ryong came to know about this system. But a law existed in New World where experience was cut after trading with stolen goods. In some cases, they could even become chaotic. But what if the Seutandal battle fleet legitimately took it back from the pirates?

As the representative of Seutandal, Isabel could make it as 'safe stolen goods.' And as it was the pirate's home base, the number of stolen goods would be frightful. Just a bit of the stolen goods would be an extravagant quantity for a normal user! When handling the stolen goods, Lee Myung-ryong's level would rise quickly! It was a dream for any merchant!

"I understand. I will tell him."

Hyun-woo hung up and started to negotiate with Gwon Hwa-rang. However, it wasn't a negotiation. Gwon Hwa-rang didn't have a choice.

"Hrm, I have to give a fee if I want the information. Because the lawless port is a threat to Seutandal's survival if left untouched. Our primary purpose is to clean up the pirates. In addition, Isabel will definitely agree if you are the intermediary. Okay, I can persuade Isabelle to give you 20% of the stolen goods recovered. Once I occupy the lawless port, I will speak with Isabel and send the promised stolen goods to Ark's store."

"Thank you."

Hyun-woo smiled and replied. 20% of the loot in the lawless port! As it was the base of the pirates, the stolen goods would go for a minimum of thousands of gold. If the goods was worth an estimated 30,000~40,000 gold then 20% would be 6,000~8,000 gold. When considering the deal

with Lee Myung-ryong, he could receive 50% of that. In other words, couldn't he just sit back and receive 3,000~4,000 gold?

'Hahaha, didn't I suffer thinking about the price of the memory crystal when the video is actually getting me thousands of gold? If I can get the stolen goods then giving 500 gold to Buksil is nothing. Isn't this like falling over and picking up money?'

Thus, the National Police Agency's investigations accidentally led to the clean-up of the pirates.

.....Ark seemed to have gained a financial windfall.

Act 9: Hwaryong Mountain

There was a small island located on the east coast of Seutandal. It was a seemingly ordinary rock island. However, there was a cave in the centre of the island where dozens of ships were docked. While the various ships had all types of crazy patterns like a motorcycle, they all had a skeleton drawn on their flags. Yes, this was the home base of the pirate's that had been attacking Seutandal. Not long ago, 40 battle ships from Seutandal surrounded the area and blocked the lawless port. However, the atmosphere of the pirate ships docked in the lawless port was so laid back it was enough to make someone sleepy. This was because the battle fleet couldn't enter the port due to the reefs and whirlpools strewn around like landmines.

"Heh, those guys are still relaxed."

JusticeMan pierced through the darkness and observed the lawless port through a telescope.

"But that relaxation will come to an end today!"

JusticeMan put away his telescope and unfolded a map. Complex lines were drawn on the scroll. Thanks to an 'anonymous informant,' he managed to obtain a chart of how to navigate to the lawless port. After obtaining the chart, JusticeMan made preparations and organized the troops. Finally, the fate of Seutandal would be decided in a decisive battle against the pirates on 'D-day.'

"We can now enter the lawless port with this chart! Now, spread all the sails! Divide the fleet into units and enter the lawless port! It's time to expel the outlaws from Seutandal!"

After JusticeMan gave the orders, the sailors busily moved around the deck. After tugging at the rope, the anchor was pulled up and the ropes bounding the sails released. Then the 40 ships anchored started to move towards the lawless port. While the ships were moving, the Baran clan on board drew their weapons. The rehabilitation members and Lariette who were the leaders of the autonomous group in Seutandal was present. There was also the assassin Shambala who had his profession quest 'New Killer' to change professions to 'God Killer' interrupted.

"How dare these guys trouble Isabel?"

Shambala prepared two daggers in both hands. Aside from the Baran, there were quite a few people from the Eastern Nation on board. In fact, the majority of the pirates included the Nakujuk clan, the Hermes alliance and chaotic players like Jepeteu. JusticeMan judged that the Baran clan would be insufficient against them so he persuaded Isabel that this mission was important for Seutandal.

-Pirate clean-up! (Seutandal Mission Quest)

In the few months since Seutandal rose, many heroes had helped defend against the threat of the Nakujuk. But in recent times, Seutandal's peace is once again threatened by the appearance of the pirates. Fortunately the Military Commander had discovered the location of the lawless port but volunteer troops were needed considering the scale of the pirates. As the representative of Seutandal, Isabel is asking for assistance from the heroes in Seutandal. If you help the Military Commander of Seutandal

kill the pirates than awards will be given according to the achievements.

<Difficulty: B+ Quest Restriction: Level 280 or more>

* Basic Compensation: All users participating in the operation will be given a 'Golden Ticket.'

The mission quest gathered users like clouds. Aside from participating in the operation, it was also possible to obtain a golden ticket by hunting the Nakujuk commanders. In recent times, the number of Nakujuk surrounding Haman Fortress had decreased so there weren't that many chances for users to obtain it. But there were quite a few users who would've participated despite the mission quest.

"Ughhh. When I think about my previous encounters with those guys....."

"At that time they took my armour!"

"I'm going to pay them back this time!"

Most of the people participating in the operation had encountered the pirates before. In order to pay back the grudge from that time, they participated voluntarily. So the battle fleet had 4,000 people that were all split into troops! They were all strong users level 300 or more. The Baran and Eastern Nation had a combined force of 3000 people. The fleet consisting of 7,000 troops advanced on the lawless port. However, the pirates scouting at the lawless port's watchtowers still hadn't grasped the atmosphere.

"Eh? Those guys are trying to enter again?"

"Heh, just leave them. They'll just be caught by the reefs and the whirlpools."

"Only the selected people can enter this place. Like us."

"Kukukuku, that's right. So let's just leisurely watch as they rush to their deaths."

When the battle fleet approached, the pirates just picked their noses and laughed. In contrast to the pirate's expectations, the battle fleet weren't caught by the reefs even after a long time passed. When the battle fleet came within a short distance, confusion spread over the face of the pirates.

"What, what the? What is going on?"

"There's something strange. The whole fleet is moving through the deadlock....."

"Hasn't it been a long time since they've entered the deadlock area? Wait? Don't tell me the information leaked?"

"What? Is now the time to be talking about this?"

"It is an emergency! We need to inform the headquarters!"

The pirates grasped the situation too late and hurriedly entered the cave to inform the headquarters.

"We've entered the range! The leader of each battleship target one watchtower respectively!"

"Mark!"

Larriette used holy magic to mark the watchtowers around the lawless port with different colours. And a ship at the forefront fired its cannons and started spewing flames.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The pillar of flame roared across the dark sky towards a watchtower. It received a simultaneous attack from four directions! All 10 watchtowers surrounding the lawless port was engulfed in flames and crumbled. After the battle fleet neutralized the watchtowers, they entered the lawless port inside the cave. When they entered the cave, 30 pirate ships docked at the harbour could be seen. The pirates had noticed the situation too late and were only now boarding the ships. However,

JusticeMan's eyes were turned towards the gun turret inside the lawless port.

"There is no need to rush. The pirate ships docked at the port will require 5 minutes for preparations before it is ready to attack. Instead of the pirate ships, we'll concentrate our attacks on the gun turrets for now. Attack!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The battle fleet lined up in the port fired without taking a break. The lawless port was enveloped in flames from the huge number of shells. Although the gun turrets also fired, it was no use against the battle fleet that had already invaded. The cannons which were shot in a blind rush weren't effective.

"Mark, mark, mark, 1st unit the red target, 2nd unit the blue, 3rd unit the yellow!"

On the other hand, the battle fleet was attacking in an orderly fashion. Once Lariette marked a target and shouted, 10 battle ships would concentrate their fire on that target. Therefore the 20 gun turrets were all destroyed while only a few combat ships were damaged. The battle fleet then started cleaning up the pirates.

"All troops disembark in the lawless port. The fleet will seal up the harbour while the combat troops will take control of the pirate ships. Attack!"

""Wah ah ah ah!"

7000 users, Baran and people from the Eastern Nation came pouring out of the battle ships. The pirates screamed as the combat troops landed.

"Huk, what, what the?"

Originally the lawless port had a total of 6000 Nakujuk and pirates gathered. However, there weren't that many pirates in the lawless port at present. The pirates had been full of tension when the battle fleet

surrounded the lawless port for the first time. But when the battle fleet couldn't enter, they had completely relaxed. Since the pirates couldn't do anything because of the siege, a lot of them had disconnected. Even the NPCs were partying and playing poker.

"T-these guys are from Seutandal..... How did they get in?"

"Run, everybody escape.....! Aaaack!"

So the 7000 combat troops swept through a relatively empty port. Furthermore, JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and Lariette were the ones commanding them!

"Warrior's Willpower, Virtuous Vitality, Pure Light!"

Warrior's Vitality increased health and stamina, Virtuous Vitality recovered a certain amount of health for 3 minutes and Pure Light sped up mana recovery! When Lariette's buffs overlapped, the capabilities of the combatants rose tremendously.

"Batter the rotten pirates with the hammer of justice and smash them to death!"

Furthermore, the special qualities of JusticeMan's Guardian profession increased various stats. The morale of the troops rose to an absurd amount.

"Hahaha, finally a fight after a long time!"

"We'll settle the stress from training the Baran clan!"

But was that all? The rehabilitation members all had special profession qualities as a Guardian and added various bonuses to the troops. Thanks to the bonuses, the capabilities of the Seutandal battle troops doubled.

"Oh, my power has increased!"

"I've been waiting for the day I could get revenge on those who plundered from me!"

"I'll smash them quickly!"

The 7000 troops split up and stormed through the port. Meanwhile, an eerie aura surrounded the masked Shambala. Shambala flew like a bomb over the combat troops and landed among the pirates.

Kwa kwa kwa bang, flash-!

At the same time, a light which looked like a net rose from Shambala's body and spread quickly. When Shambala's net of light penetrated the pirates, they received enormous damage and there was a fountain of blood.

"What the, what is that?"

"The sword, no dagger is used so quickly that it looks like he is brandishing a net of light!"

Overwhelming strength! The pirates and even Seutandal's combat troops were entranced for a moment. Then 1000 masked people suddenly appeared at the pirate's back. The members of the Eastern Nation had waited for a chance and used 'Stealth' to approach the pirates from behind. The Eastern Nation unleashed their attacks, causing the pirates to scream and roll on the ground. The users stared at Shambala and the Eastern Nation with gaping mouths.

"A-amazing! They seemed like ordinary NPCs in Seutandal....."

"I heard they played an active part in the Seutandal War....."

"Now's not the time for this. We receive rewards for this mission quest according to our achievements. We can't let our achievements get taken away by that masked fellow!"

"Okay. We should group up and take care of one person!"

The users who participated more actively in the battle would receive more rewards. Thus the pirates of the lawless port were cleaned up in only two hours. 15 pirate ships were destroyed in the clean-up operation

while 17 pirate ships were seized. And JusticeMan was also able to obtain the stolen goods within the warehouse worth 27,000 gold. When the value of the pirate ship was changed into gold, it was equivalent to 120,000 gold. Every user and NPC who participated in the operation was awarded according to their achievement. That left 50,000 gold left. A few days later, stolen goods worth 10,000 gold were delivered to Ark's Comprehensive Store in Lancel village.

Kiaaaaah!

A cry of distress rang out from the steep mountain slope battered by violent gusts of wind. A red warning message floated in front of Ark.

-The 'Hair-raising Scream' was used!

<For 3 minutes, you will be gripped with fear and have your attack speed and movement speed decreased by 10%. This effect can be stacked up to 5 times.

Currently overlapped 3 times: Attack Speed and Movement Speed decreased by 30%>

"Ouch!"

Ark flinched and looked at the sky with irritation. The wild wind also stirred up the rough sand, causing him to be battered by a sandstorm on the mountain. If he raised his head and peered through the sandstorm, a hazy silhouette which seemed like a mirage could be seen. It was the form of a female body with wings.

'Encountering something this strange in a place like this.....'

Pabababa, pabababa!

While Ark was complaining, the woman stretched out a wing and a projectile flew at him. It was feather which was as sharp as an arrow!

“Damn, it’s starting again.”

Ark rolled and hid his body behind a rock while cursing. After escaping from the thieves in Bosaga village and eating the Necromancer’s Immortality Pill, Ark had been filled with motivation.

Although there were some minor problems, everything was put in order as planned. The only thing he had left to do was the <Home of the Fire Draconian> quest! So Ark began to cross the magic kingdom of Bristania to the destination of his quest in the north. In fact, Ark hadn’t been that worried about the quest. <Home of the Fire Draconian> was a quest he received from an item with a level 120 restriction. Of course, he couldn’t have confirmed the item when he first received it. So he delayed the quest and now Ark was over level 370. Who would be worried about a level 120 quest in such a situation? He was only worried that he would be wasting time completing the quest.

‘No, I still don’t know.’

But Ark soon shook his head. <Home of the Fire Draconian> was from a quest item so it wasn’t an ordinary quest. It was a quest item from the Event Quest where thousands of people participated. That is to say, it was a unique quest which only one person in New World could start! Then of course the reward would be a unique item. Even if the level was a bit low, a unique item would sell for a bit more than a level 300 magic item. The value of unique items wasn’t their attack or defense but the special effect attached to the item.

‘Considering the background of the quest, there is a chance that the quest will lead to one with a higher level of difficulty.’

When considering that point, he couldn’t ignore it even if it was a low level quest. With his expectations of the quest, he was eager to start it. After living in the magic kingdom of Bristania for a bit, Ark’s knew that the environment, buildings, NPCs and even the quests were completely different from Schudenberg and Seutandal. It really felt like he was on an overseas trip. Therefore Ark was really able to enjoy the feeling of the online game and travelled happily. It was only after arriving at the northern mountains that Ark started to become upset.

“Dammit, why did those monsters chose here of all places to inhabit?”

Ark glared at the feathers flying continuously and sighed. After travelling through Bristania for a week and arriving at the Hwaryong mountain range, Ark had encountered a level 350 monster the Harpy.

‘Fortunately I can collect a lot of experience.....’

The quest had a restriction of level 120 so he had thought the monsters on Hwaryong Mountain would be low levelled. If the monsters were level 200 then he wouldn’t receive any experience. Although he thought this, he wasn’t really worried about the level 350 Harpy. But after he fought with the Harpy, Ark would’ve rather preferred a low level monster. The Harpy was a monster in the form of a woman with wings. But it absolutely didn’t look like a pretty woman. With a deep blood skin colour and many wrinkles, it was a monster designed to look scary. However, the problem wasn’t the Harpy’s appearance.

Even though he would rather it not look like a woman, it was a monster so Ark didn’t have reservations about hitting it. The reason for Ark’s annoyance was not the Harpy’s appearance but its wings. Wings..... Yes, the Harpy was a flying monster which Ark found the most troublesome. In fact, there were quite a few flying monsters in Bristania thanks to its geographical conditions. However, the users in Bristania didn’t have any problems with that. Bristania was a magic kingdom so there were a high percentage of magicians. As magicians were experts in long ranged attacks, flying monsters were an easy opponent. However, Ark was a warrior so it was a nuisance for him.

‘I have to avoid the flying monsters that inhabit this area as much as possible.....’

If he avoided the quest destination Hwaryong Mountain then it wouldn’t be a problem. In particular, Ark was forced into a corner thanks to the ‘Hair-raising Scream.’ Just like its name, the ‘Hair-raising Scream’ sounded like fingernails scratching down a chalkboard. Thanks to that, Ark’s motivation to fight fell. Furthermore, the technique was classified as a ‘Sound’ attack so it couldn’t be avoided or

blocked. Hunting flying monsters in that state wasn't easy. After hearing the 'Hair-raising Scream,' his body really felt sluggish.

Ark hid behind the rock and didn't move until the Harpy rushed through the sandstorm with its claws extended. It was an attack which fell vertically through the sky from 10 feet. It was a dangerous attack which had a high probability of being a critical hit if Ark was damaged by it. Ark rolled out from the rock and twisted his blade.

Chwarararak, ttadadadang!

The Saw Blade separated the wind and subsequently dealt damage. The Harpy stumbled from the impact and lost its balance. Ark once again swung his sword. However, the Harpy instinctively perceived the crisis and flapped its wings quickly. Ark changed the direction at once but the Harpy had already escaped from his attack range. The flying speed of the Harpy exceeded imagination. On the other hand, Ark couldn't even bend properly thanks to the rough winds on the mountain. When the Harpy moved so quickly in such a state, he couldn't determine its location properly. The environmental effect gave Ark a considerable penalty while granting an advantage to the Harpy. Once the Harpy flew like that, not even the Saw blade that changed into a whip could reach it.

Kikikiki, kikikiki!

The Harpy smirked and teased him as it flew beyond his range.

"Okay. So you want to die?"

Ark stared at the Harpy before clenching his fist firmly and shouting.

"I'll hit you this time you stupid old crow, 'Lock on.' Soul Extortion!"

At that moment, a transparent emerged from Ark's fist. The Harpy flapped its wings and tried to escape. But Ark moved the translucent hand with his fist, tracking the Harpy's movements before finally grabbing it tightly. Then like a rubber band, the transparent hand returned to Ark while holding something which vaguely resembled the Harpy.

-You have taken away a part of the Harpy's soul using Soul Extortion!

<After extorting the Harpy's soul, you have dealt 50 damage and your Spiritual Power has been slightly elevated.>

"Huhuhu, this use of this skill is quite surprising."

Ark laughed as he checked the message window. It was the newly learned 'Soul Extortion' that he gained after eating the Necromancer's Immortality Pill. In fact, Ark had thought it was slightly regrettable when he first checked the information window of the Soul Extortion skill. But after he used it a few times, he thought that the information was slightly insufficient. When utilized in an actual fight, the effect was quite good.

While the skill only raised his Spiritual Power and no other stats, Ark's favourite part of Soul Extortion was that it had a range of 30~40 metres. It was equal to the range of archers who had mastered Advanced Archery. Ark was able to deal with the Harpy thanks to Soul Extortion. Although it only did 50 damage, the effect was 100 times better than his beginner's Archery. Furthermore, Soul Extortion was a skill which didn't consume mana and had no cool down time. The only difficulty with using Soul Extortion was that he had to 'Lock on' to the target first. Lock on required a certain amount of time to be fixed onto the target but it wasn't easy with the Harpy flying around in the sandstorm. So while attacking, Ark had to stare at the monster. But once Lock on was successful, it didn't go away until the end of the battle.

"Now shall I start attacking earnestly? You are already screwed. Soul Extortion! Soul Extortion! Soul Extortion!.....No, it's not enough. Soul Extortion!"

Ark ran after the Harpy and fired Soul Extortion blindly. The transparent hand shot forward like an arrow every time and removed a part of the soul. Since it was infused with the spirit of the monster, he felt a little ill absorbing it but he didn't question it too closely. Eventually its health would fall below 10% and the Harpy would try to run away. It was a cowardly monster that would hide until

its health was 100% again. Before escaping to a place he couldn't reach, Ark had to reduce its health.

Kiiiiik, kiiiik!

When the Harpy's health fell to 7%, as expected it instantly flew away up the rocky mountain.

"Now Racard. Dark Dash!"

"Okay!"

Racard who had been hiding behind the rock at Ark's order shot forward and impacted with the back of the Harpy's head. The Harpy who had been hit wobbled and shook. However, Racard was a ruthless bat. Racard soared through the sky and continued head butting the falling Harpy. Each hit was like a nail being beaten by a hammer.

"Make it descend so that I can finish this!"

Once the Harpy entered his range, Ark swung the Saw blade and wound it around the Harpy's ankle. When he flipped the Saw blade over his shoulder, the Harpy was flung and impacted with the ground. This was the method he devised to capture the Harpy who ran away. When he first arrived at the rocky mountains, Ark didn't know anything about flying monsters and used Racard and the Saw blade to fight. However, the Harpy was a monster which instinctively attacking the flying object first. No matter what Ark did, if Racard was visible than he would die first. Since aerial combat was often dozens of metres in the air, it was impossible for Ark to do anything. Racard's current ability was at a level 270 standard. No matter how trained his pet was, he had no chance of winning a 1 on 1 fight against the level 350 Harpy. Thanks to that, Racard had died many times in Hwaryong Mountain. So Ark didn't utilize Racard during the battles after that. He instead made in lie in ambush and only used Racard for the element of surprise against the Harpy.

Racard faithfully played the role this time.

Once the Harpy had been caught by the Saw blade and thrown into the ground, Racard started head butting it and stamping on its wings with fury. The Harpy was stuck on the ground. Even a flying monster wasn't able to easily get back up. Ark also realized this.

"Now it is time to finish this!"

Ark used Sprint and pierced the chest of the Harpy with his Saw blade. He could feel it as the sword penetrated the ribs. The Harpy's wings flapped a few more times until it couldn't last any more.

-Your level has risen.

When the Harpy collapsed, he received the wonderful message.

"Phew, I gained one level. The experience gained is quite good when comparing the time it takes to hunt."

Ark nodded as he browsed the character information window. Even though the Harpy was lower levelled than Ark, as a flying monster it gave 20% more experience than general monsters. Although it takes a lot of time to hunt one, the rate of experience gain is similar to hunting monsters of the same level.

"Character information window!"

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment	Good +500		
Fame	2,365 (+500)	Level	371
Profession	Dark Soul		
Title	Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero		
Health	6,965	Mana	7,155 (+25)

	(+225)		
Spiritual Power	407	Strength	757 (+38)
Agility	947 (+110)	Stamina	1,187 (+35)
Wisdom	173 (+10)	Intelligence	1,255 (+5)
Luck	167 (+60)	Flexibility	168
Art of Communication	69	Affection	134 (+10)
Resilience	439	Dark Fog	24
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		153	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.			
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%			
Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10			
*<Animal King> Set effect: Strength + 20, Agility + 20, Stamina +20, Defense +40			
Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3			
Wolf's Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Jump' is available			
Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.			

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available

Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark

* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

* 10% increased attack and defense.

* Skill points: 80

"Not bad."

Ark closed the information window with a satisfied expression. Ark deliberately only went to places on Hwaryong Mountain where the monsters were high levelled. Thanks to that, he managed to gain 5 levels in a week and was currently level 371. Of course, If he grabbed a good hunting spot than he could gain 2~3 more levels, but he never expected

that much experience from this quest. However, it was quite annoying because Hwaryong Mountain had quite a lot of harpies.

“It seems like recently I’ve swept almost all of them up.....”

When he first arrived at Hwaryong Mountain, he had been attacked by quite a few harpies. Sometimes he would be attacked by three or four at once. But after walking around Hwaryong Mountain for a couple of days, it became difficult to see the Harpies. It had taken him 20 minutes to handle that previous Harpy.

“Now that the surroundings have been cleaned up, I should be able to climb up.....”

In fact, Ark hadn’t taken care of the Harpies on the slopes of Hwaryong Mountain because he wanted to. Although it gave 20% more experience, hunting Harpies took a while and it was quite tedious. And the japtem dropped wasn’t that good either. Since the sandstorm limited the topographic range of his map, he decided it was more efficient to hunt the harpies at the base of the mountain. While hunting the Harpies, he had climbed the mountain for two days. The slope was pretty amicable until halfway up the mountain. However, suddenly sheer cliffs were blocking the way and he couldn’t go any further.

‘When I received the quest, the destination was marked on the map as the centre of Hwaryong Mountain. In other words, it is the top of Hwaryong Mountain.....but no matter how many times I went around, it wasn’t possible to find a path to reach the top. There is one route where I can ascend.....’

Ark checked the map once again and looked at the hill on the opposite side. When the sandstorm stopped yesterday evening, he was able to confirm there was a route from the hill on the opposite side. However, the hill on the other side was dozens of metres from Ark’s current location. However, the bottom of the cliffs between the hills weren’t even visible. So Ark had given up on the other hill and spent the next two days looking for another route but eventually gave up. He came to the conclusion that he had to go over the ravine.

“But how can I do that?”

Ark worried for a while but eventually acknowledged that there was no choice. Yes, Ark knew about a method to go over the cliff since discovering the hill on the other side. It was the hang glider method he used to escape from the vampire territory!

“While the hang glider can get me to the place I desire, it is not an aeroplane. Fortunately there are strong winds in this area. If I correctly guess the timing of the wind then it could take me to the hill. Yes, that is the only way left.”

Of course, it wasn't going to be that easy to ride the hang glider and navigate past the ravine. But it wasn't possible to wander Hwaryong Mountain forever so he had no choice. If he used Slime's Time then he didn't have to worry about the fall damage. Of course, if he fell to the ravine bottom then he would have to wander again but the worst situation could be avoided. Ark made his decision and shouted towards a pile of rocks in the back.

“Buksil!”

Then Buksil who had been hiding behind the rock wandered out. After losing Baekgu, he was still depressed and looked shabby. The absence of Baekgu cast a large shadow on Buksil.

“Why?”

“We have to use the hang glider to move to that hill. Even with a good wind, I won't be able to reach the other hill with two people riding. So just place the eyeball on me and set up a campsite at the base of the mountain.”

“Whatever.”

“Don't just play around when I'm not there and collect some ingredients. We only have a few left.”

“Okay, I understand.”

Buksil waved his hand like it was troublesome. While Buksil's attitude was bad, Ark showed patience and held his tongue. These days Buksil was more aware of the game. In such a situation, a beating really might make him quit the game. If Buksil quit the game then it would cause significant problems for Ark. Because of that, Ark decided to maintain his patience. However, he couldn't help feeling annoyed every time.

'The weather is hot, the wind was blowing sand continuously for a few days and Buksil is acting like a damp rag..... It really makes my impatient.'

Ark stared at Buksil before speaking.

"Radun, hang glider."

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun opened his mouth absentmindedly and spat out the hang glider. Ark grabbed the hang glider and waited for the wind direction to change. After the wind blew towards the ravine for a while, Ark used Sprint to run off the cliff and threw his body. While his body wobbled for a while, Ark eventually maintained his balance and the hang glider flew steadily on the breeze.

"That's it. This should be enough to get me to the hill on the other side! Huh?"

Ark was just sighing with relief when it happened. When he had flown halfway, a gust of wind suddenly hit his side. The hang glider shook and lost its centre. Ark hurriedly moved his weight to catch the centre again but the blast had caused him to go lower than he wanted.

"Dammit, I'm screwed!"

Ark burst out as he raised his head and checked the distance to the other hill. The worst situation that Ark was worried about had occurred. To be exact, the flight of a hang glider was to descend. An aeroplane could rise whenever it wanted but the hang glider depended on riding the current of the wind.

“When I calculated the wind, I would’ve made it with a close distance.....”

Yet his height had decreased by several metres in the middle of the ravine. With his current path, he would be slammed into a cliff instead of reaching the hill.

‘Dammit, it’s a failure. Because I was annoyed by Buksil when calculating the direction of the wind, I departed a little late.’

Regret showed on Ark’s face.

‘If I slam into the cliff at this speed then I don’t know what will happen. I’ll probably die if I fall in this state. Should I jump down now and use Slime’s Time at the appropriate height?’

However, the problem wasn’t that simple. If Ark jumped down than the hang glider would impact with the cliff. It wasn’t durable so the hang glider would shatter with one blow.

“No! I struggled so much just to make this..... Something....there must be another way!”

At that time, a Harpy flying from the opposite hill caught his eye. An idea sparked in Ark’s head.

“Racard, that fellow! Use Taunt to pull that guy here!”

“Huh? Why?”

“Shut up! Just do as I say!”

“U-understood!”

Racard hurriedly flew towards the other hill after Ark shouted.

“Hey, you wrinkled old crow! Where are you going?”

The Harpy shrieked and approached after Racard used Taunt. Racard avoided the attack and flew towards Ark. Then Ark wound his Saw blade around the Harpy's ankle and shouted.

"That's it. Now lead it back to the hill on the other side!"

"Aha, I understand now. Hey, you crow! Where are you looking? This way! Come and catch me~."

Racard stuck out his tongue and used Taunt again. Once again, the Harpy's instinct was to attack the flying object first. When Intermediate Taunt was also used by his low level pet, it was perfectly caught. The Harpy chased after Racard and forgot that Ark had his blade wrapped around its ankle. Ark had aimed for that. While he would have no chance with Racard who was the size of a mouse, the Harpy's wings reached two metres so the altitude of the hang glider gradually increased. After a while, Ark managed to land on the opposite hill.

"Thank you Harpy! This is for you. Dark Blade!"

After putting away the hang glider, Ark laughed at the Harpy.

Kiiiik? Kiiiik?

The Harpy finally noticed that something was wrong. However, it was already too late. It eventually died flapping its wings and Ark sliced it up like chicken meat.

"Phew, that's it. I found a way."

After taking care of the Harpy, Ark surveyed the area. When looking from the other hill, he had seen that there was a path between the rocks. Ark hunted the Harpies who appeared and started to climb Hwaryong Mountain again. While the slope on this side was more gentle, it still wasn't easy. Ark wound his Saw blade around the rock like climbing gear and used Jump. How much time had passed? After climbing another 5~6 metres, Ark used Jump and landed on a rock. The sandstorm gradually subsided and revealed a wide plateau in front of him.

“Is this normal?”

Ark looked around the surroundings with a vacant expression. When he reached the top, it seemed like a new world. The plateau stretched out so far into the horizon that it really seemed to touch the sky. While a sandstorm raged underneath him, there was no hint of sand to be seen on the plateau. It seemed like a place that was just floating in the sky. Standing alone in that place really gave him a refreshing feeling.

“Is this the reason people like to climb?”

However, Ark’s purpose wasn’t climbing. The reason he ascended Hwaryong Mountain was to settle a quest. As soon as he reached the top, Ark found the quest destination. No, it wasn’t that he found it. There was a large dome located in the centre of the plateau that reached dozens of kilometres that could be easily seen with one glance.

“That is absolutely the quest destination.....”

Ark approached the dome emitting a black aura with eyes filled with curiosity.

“This fellow!”

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

There was a loud roaring and the earth started shaking. Ark turned his head with surprise and saw something he never expected. After confirming the approaching presence, his face stiffened.

“Huk, what, what the? That guy is.....?”

A huge monster reaching 20 metres was getting closer to Ark. The 20 metre monster also had black fire around its body! While the lower part of the body was a dragon, the upper part was in the shape of a man wearing red armour. Ark had seen that monster a long time ago in Jackson. It was the leader of the Army of Darkness who died by Ark’s hand! The name.....

“...Eek? No way.....Valderas?”

“Sob, Baekgu.....”

Buksil cried as he descended the slope. After putting the eyeball on Ark, Buksil had no interest anymore. No, it wasn't just Ark. After Baekgu died, Buksil had lost interest in the game itself. Among the large number of NPCs in New World, Baekgu was only one. Baekgu's behaviour was just an illusion created by the artificial intelligence of New World. Buksil also knew this. However, it was different understanding it with his heart than with his mind.

.....When thinking about the feel of stroking Baekgu's body and his smell, Buksil's chest became pained from the memories. He thought it would become okay over time but that feeling only intensified when he connected to the game.

“Not even videos can interest me anymore. I.....if I hadn't taken the video then Baekgu wouldn't have..... Sob, everything is my fault. But if I quit the game then wouldn't Baekgu's death be useless? I should at least build the statue of Baekgu in Selebrid before quitting. Yes, I can't quit the game until then. But.....but..... Sob, if I close my eyes it seems like I can still hear Baekgu's voice.....”

Buksil sniffled and muttered.

“Master!”

Was Buksil sleeping? After separating from Ark, he could vividly hear Baekgu's voice. The thought made Buksil even more emotional as tears dripped from his eyes.

“Sob sob sob, Baekgu. Your voice is still so vivid.....”

“Master!”

Once again Baekgu's voice could be heard. Then he had a thought. He definitely heard Baekgu's voice somewhere. Buksil suddenly raised his head and looked everywhere as he shouted like a maniac.

"Huk, what, what the? Baekgu? Is it really Baekgu? Where? Where are you? It's really Baekgu?"

"Master, I'm here!"

Then a blurry image appeared on the other side of the sandstorm. Buksil rubbed at the one eyeball left and froze. When he stared again, the image became clear. Something was running down the steep slope through the sandstorm. While the distance was still far and only the silhouette could be seen, Buksil knew with one glance. It was his pet dog who he would never forget, Baekgu! The Baekgu he thought had died was running towards him tearfully.

"B-Baekgu!"

"Master!"

Buksil ran down the steep slope so fast he almost fell. Then Baekgu jumped onto him and waved his tail while hugging and licking Buksil. Dog saliva was getting on his face but Buksil didn't worry about such things.

The dog he thought was dead had returned alive! He was at Hwaryong Mountain which was hundreds of kilometres from Bosaga village. If this was a dream or illusion then he didn't want it to break.

"Ohhhhh, B-Baekgu. I made a mistake. I should've never....."

"Sob sob sob, no Master. I didn't properly protect Master....."

Buksil and Baekgu embraced each other while brimming with tears.

"Ohhh, it really is Baekgu. Baekgu is really alive. Sob, thank you, you're alive. But how did this happen? How did you get away from those villains? I don't see any injuries....."

“Huh? T-that is.....”

Baekgu scratched the back of his head and hesitated. Then a man exited the sandstorm after Baekgu and muttered.

“Hmm, what a good scene. The dog and his owner is like this. My nose is also dripping because I’m moved.”

Then the female elf following behind him declared in a curt voice.

“Bah, did we follow that dog all the way here just to see a good scene?

“Huck, y-you are.....?”

Buksil’s face paled as he saw the huge man and female elf.

‘Those guys.....?’

It was the pair Ark and Buksil had least expected to be standing there.

Over 1000 kilometres away in the far south, someone else was in the same situation. It was the masked Shambala hiding himself in the dark using Stealth. After cleaning up the pirates from Seutandal a while ago, Shambala had arrived in Lancel village He had transported 20% of the stolen goods as Isabel promised however Shambala had another reason for going there. In order to finish his ‘New Killer’ quest to change professions, he needed a ridiculous item and JusticeMan directed him to Roco in Lancel village who would have information about it. But Shambala encountered an unexpected event at Lancel village and changed his plans. No, it was because he saw an unexpected person.

‘How is that guy here? If he is the ringleader of the events happening around Lancel village lately.....this problem might be more serious than expected. I can’t solve this problem by myself.’

Shambala looked at the group and sneaked out of the cave.

TO BE CONTINUED